

PACIFIC WORLD

Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies

Third Series, Number 10
Fall 2008

TWO SPECIAL SECTIONS:
PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON BUDDHISM
NEW PERSPECTIVES ON BUDDHIST MODERNISM

CONTENTS

SPECIAL SECTION:
PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON BUDDHISM

Introductory Notes MARK UNNO	1
On Silence HOGEN BAYS	3
The Dialectic of the Three Vows as an Expression of Shinran's Religious Experience TAKANORI SUGIOKA	9
Listening to the Buddha's Noble Truths: A Method to Alleviate Social Suffering VEENA R. HOWARD	23
The Emancipation of Evil Beings: The Story of the Salvation of King Ajātaśatru NAOKI NABESHIMA	45
Ajātaśatru: Family System and Karma MARIE YOSHIDA	65
Affinities between Zen and Analytical Psychology JAMES KIRSCH	85

SPECIAL SECTION:
NEW PERSPECTIVES ON BUDDHIST MODERNISM

New Perspectives on Buddhist Modernism JEFF WILSON	97
Swedenborg: A Modern Buddha? WAKOH SHANNON HICKEY	101
A Brief History of Interdependence DAVID L. McMAHAN	131
Traditionalist Representations of Buddhism RICHARD K. PAYNE	177
Multiple Buddhist Modernisms: <i>Jhāna</i> in Convert Theravāda NATALIE QULI	225
BOOK REVIEW	
<i>No Time to Lose</i> By Pema Chödrön DAIJAKU JUDITH KINST	251
BDK ENGLISH TRIPITĀKA SERIES: A PROGRESS REPORT	259

Introductory Note

Mark Unno

University of Oregon

BEGINNING WITH 2004, the Center for Humanities, Religion, and Science at Ryukoku University of Japan; the Institute of Buddhist Studies; and the University of Oregon have been the central collaborators on research into the field of Buddhism and psychotherapy. Of these three institutions, the biggest driving force has been the Center for Humanities, Religion, and Science at Ryukoku University and its current director, Professor Naoki Nabeshima—recipient of three consecutive Twenty-First Century Center of Excellence grants from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology—and the largest contributor in terms of funding and resources. Also key have been the Institute of Buddhist Studies and its dean, Dr. Richard Payne, and various units within the University of Oregon including the Department of Religious Studies, the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, and the Oregon Humanities Center. In addition, the Institute for Philosophy & Religion, Boston University, and the then director, Dr. David Eckel, have also been instrumental in our collaboration as the host of the first of three international conferences held biannually from 2004 to 2008, the second and third conferences having been held at the University of Oregon and Ryukoku University, respectively.

From these efforts, three edited volumes have been published: *Buddhism and Psychotherapy across Cultures: Theories and Practices*, edited by Mark Unno (2006); *Shi to ai: inochi e no fukai rikai wo motomete* (Death and Life: In Search of a Deeper Understanding), edited by Naoki Nabeshima (2007); and *Kokoro no yamai to shūkyōsei: fukai keichō* (Psychopathology and Religiousness: Deep Listening), edited by Osamu Kuramitsu, Naoki Nabeshima, Yasunobu Okada, and Mark Unno (2008). Currently, two further volumes are planned, one each in English and Japanese. For

the forthcoming volume in English, we will be drawing upon papers presented at the previous two conferences in 2006 and 2008.

However, rather than include all papers from these two conferences in the upcoming volume, we have decided to publish a select number in the present issue of *Pacific World*. These include Hogen Bays' essay on silence, Takanori Sugioka's exposition on the dialectic of the three vows as found in the thought of Shinran, Veena Howard's on Gandhi and Buddhism, Naoki Nabeshima's examination of the story of Ajātaśatru from a Shin Buddhist perspective, and Marie Yoshida's analysis of family systems theory in light of the story of Ajātaśatru. All of these papers were part of the University of Oregon conference in 2006 except for that of Takanori Sugioka, which was presented in Kyoto in 2008.

The first three, by Bays, Sugioka, and Howard, do not directly address current methods and issues in clinical psychotherapy. However, they were very significant for the interdisciplinary elucidation they brought to our conference efforts, providing key points of reference and comparison from the perspectives of Zen Buddhist practice, Shin Buddhist thought, and Buddhism and Hinduism in the context of the work of Gandhi as spiritual and socio-political healer.

The last two essays provide in-depth examinations of the story of Prince Ajātaśatru involving his regicide of his own father as well as imprisonment of his mother. Through the work of Japanese clinicians Heisaku Kosawa and Keigo Okonogi, this episode, a cornerstone of Shin Buddhism, has also become integral to the narratives of Japanese psychiatry and psychotherapy. Nabeshima and Yoshida's studies further our understanding of the significance of this story in Buddhist and family therapy contexts. These two papers, we felt, would be most illuminating for the readers of *Pacific World*.

Our critical, interdisciplinary inquiry has brought to light what has turned out to be the complex intersection of multiple Buddhisms and psychotherapies, the fruits of which will be borne out more fully in our upcoming edited volumes. However, the selection of essays presented here stand on their own for the contributions they have made to our ongoing investigations.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Richard Payne and Natalie Quli of the Institute of Buddhist Studies for all of their expert editorial work on this selection of papers.

On Silence

Hogen Bays

Great Vow Monastery, Oregon

TO REALLY HEAR we must be silent. Sound exists against a background of silence, just as the foreground is in contrast with what is behind it. When the background is clear and empty then the foreground is vivid and bright.

We all experience this background silence. When we hear a sound, whether it be a note or a symphony, it exists against the backdrop of silence and space. This is true not only of sound but also of the objects of the other five senses. Just as our planet rests in space, thought and sensation are surrounded by silence. The thoughts and ideas which we think of as our mind rest in space and stillness. Silence is around this moment. This background cannot be known with the intellect, because as soon as some “thing” is perceived it has already been distinguished from what is behind it. Because it is ubiquitous it is called Great Silence, Great Stillness, or Great Space. But, even Great Silence becomes just another idea as soon as the intellectual mind tries to know it.

To experience Great Silence it is first important to empty the mind of ideas, notions, and insights. One common way to do this is through Buddhist meditation. There are many types of Buddhist meditation, and they all require our attention to be fully engaged with what is, right here, right now. This process is not easy. Usually we have to proceed through several stages to touch deep silence. It is helpful to begin by creating ordinary silence, finding a quiet environment free from normal distractions. Then we can begin formal meditation, turning the attention inwards, using “mindfulness and insight.” With mindfulness we first become aware of sensation, such as sound, and then with insight we look into it deeply. When we begin to meditate there is little awareness of silence. At first our attention is not focused on silence or sound, but on the endless stream of opinions, memories, and likes

and dislikes that obfuscate deeper awareness. Gradually, by letting go of distractions and repeatedly turning the attention back to the direct sensory experience of sound, sound becomes purified. There is “just sound.” When a concentrated mind rests completely on pure sound then we can take a step backward into a greater awareness of the silence around the sound.

To be aware of vast silence enables us to hear what someone else is saying uncluttered by the background noise of our own thoughts. Just as in a silent room a faint sound maybe clearly heard, when our mind is deeply quiet we can hear subtleties of speech and presentation that otherwise would go unnoticed. To be silent inside is to be open, willing to receive what the speaker wishes us to hear. To deeply listen and hear the sounds of the world, we must be familiar with silence.

There is a classic Zen story of a professor who visited a Zen master. The master greeted him and offered him tea. The professor said, “Please teach me about Zen.” The master began pouring tea. He continued pouring till the tea overflowed and splashed on the floor. “Stop, stop, the cup is full. No more will go in!” Master smiled and said, “Just so. You can’t put more in a full container. Before you can learn, you must empty your mind.”

The thinking mind is too full to know deep silence. It is always busy, separating this from that, defining, identifying, and creating. To experience deep silence the mind must be empty, not blurred by the interference of thoughts, opinions, worries, music, or images. These all require the mind to be active, engaged with past memories and future possibilities. When the mind rests in silence there are no or few thoughts. It is empty of judgment and opinion, free of fantasies of past and future. The mind, when it is silent, is always present. This is not a void, empty, dead state. It is like a vast universe of potential energy out of which all things arise.

Jizō Bosatsu (Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva 地藏菩薩) represents the archetypical vow to relieve suffering in all six realms of existence. Compassionate people who work to relieve suffering encounter many kinds of frightening, dark, and difficult circumstances. How can we as budding bodhisattvas do this? With Great Silence. Deep inner silence is of high value to anyone who works with violence, catastrophe, death, or great suffering. Hearing stories of torture, abuse, or cruelty with an angry or anxious mind can lead to hopelessness and despair. But, if we listen from a place of deep silence we can maintain some equanimity

and clarity of mind. Inner silence is not anxious. Inner silence is not reactive. Inner silence allows us to hear things clearly and deeply, to hear things as they really are. When we know things as they really are then we can respond effectively without reactivity and burnout.

Deep silence is the source of creativity. When the mind is busy we tend to look at things through our filters, our opinions, and our assumptions based on our past experience. But silence can be experienced only now, so what comes into the view of the silent mind can be seen freshly. This fresh eye can look on problems with more flexibility and creativity. The restricted mental filters through which we habitually view the world dissolve, allowing new perspectives and creative approaches to old challenges. For example, many artists experience blocks in creativity. No matter how hard they try what they produce feels stale, uninspired, or just wrong. Often the cause is attempting to “think” their way through a problem by grasping at old ideas that no longer work. When artists stop the mind, stop exerting effort to make something happen and rest in alert, aware silence—then out of the unbounded mind of silence creativity blossoms anew.

Experiencing silence of the mind is not easy. It can even be frightening when we first touch it because all that we are accustomed to relying on disappears. We enter a state of “not knowing.” In the ordinary way of thinking our lives are dependent on what and how much we know: knowing where we are, who we are, what we are going to do, what the outcome will be, and so on and on. The most important task of the maturing mind is to learn what will enable us to survive and succeed in society. Throughout life learning and being open to learning is essential for an intelligent life. But learning has an end. No matter how much we know there is always more that is unknown. Deep silence is the heart of the unknown, the Great Mystery. To let go, even for a few moments, of all that we know, and to step into the Great Mystery, can change our view of the world and of ourselves. We see that what we normally think of as “I” is only a small and pale reflection of our true nature, Deep Silence. To take this step is one of the perennial challenges of the spiritual path.

For people of our age, discovering the satisfaction and peace of silence is difficult. Silence is constantly challenged. Setting aside ignorance (Jpn. *mumyō* 無明, Skt. *avidyā*, Pāli *avijjā*; also Jpn. *chi* 癡 or Pāli *moha*, “delusion”) for the moment, these threats to silence fall into two basic categories, trying to get something we want (Jpn. *ken* 慳, Skt.

rāga; also *lobha*, or *trṣṇā*), or trying to get rid of something we don't want (Jpn. *shin* 瞋, Pāli *dosa*, Skt. *dveṣa*). We are taught from an early age that we should be able to buy what we want. We are educated by the media on what we "should" have, and how we "should" get it. Applying this one-sided view, we attempt to get anything we think might bring peace and pleasure. We insist that with enough effort, the best technique, or the perfect environment, we will get what will make us happy. When this grasping state of mind is applied to the spiritual life we try to capture the peace and wisdom of silence as if it were one more thing we could buy. But this attempt to get something, to "get" silence, to "make" inner peace happen, creates so much noise that real silence cannot be heard. Because this noise obscures the deep truth of our lives, some people are driven into ever greater frantic activity of the mind. To sit with a distressed person and guide his or her attention to what is present, to help him or her learn to quiet the mind, gives that person a touch of peace. In the Zen Buddhist tradition this is one of the principles that is used in private interview (Jpn. *sanzen* 参禅, or *dokusan* 獨參). The teacher sits, calmly in a quiet room, with his or her mind still, without judgment or expectation, waiting for a student to arrive. When the student enters this environment, sits quietly, and breaths attentively, the student resonates with the teacher's state of mind. In this way little by little the student can learn to feel the silence in him- or herself that is always present.

However, instead of delving into the silence of the Great Mystery, much of our society tries to get rid of it. As a culture we are averse to silence, often afraid of it. We have used our technical skills to try to fill silence, cover it over, with music, radio, television, movies, and iPods. People walk down the street in their own separate world of sound, wired directly into the ear. In most buildings, from homes to shopping malls, there is ubiquitous sound. Movies bombard all of the senses with sounds so intense they can be felt and seen. In the war against silence, we have created the greatest cacophony in human history, where inner and outer noise pollution has become so extreme that it is regarded as "normal." But it is not normal. Paying attention in this environment becomes like trying to have a conversation on a cell phone with poor reception in a crowded room with rock music playing. Without the ability to rest in silence, to know what is behind all of the noise, we become confused, unable to think clearly, unable to focus, distracted. To be healthy we must know silence.

The main weapon in the war against silence is desire or craving (Jpn. *ai* 愛, Skt. *trṣṇā*). Environmental noise covers over one level of silence, but it does not stop at the ear drum. As a culture we have chosen to subject ourselves to the relentless bombardment of noisy advertising. This goes directly into the mind. In silence there is no separation and therefore no desire. But when we attune our mind to the seductive noise of the world we become full of desires for things we do not have and did not know existed. Through media we begin to live stirred up, full of artificially generated emotions, which give us the illusion of living an exciting, pleasure-filled life. Instead, dissatisfaction and dismay (Jpn. *ku* 苦, Skt. *duḥkha*) with our self-generated insufficiency are the results. By trying to treat our dismay with still more noise, more desire, we fuel the source of suffering. The suffering that we then feel leads to violence by humans against the rest of the natural world. As the second noble truth says, “Craving is the origin of suffering.” Through craving we turn away from what we have always had, is always with us, in us, around us—silence.

But the deep silence that is underneath all things is always present, always available. It is not relative so it is worth nothing. It cannot be created, used up, bought, or sold. It cannot be killed, blown up, or destroyed. It can only be hidden, and what is hidden can be found. This is the eternal truth of Buddhism, that peace, nirvana, freedom is always possible. The Great Silence, Great Stillness, Great Space is the source of all things. It is Wisdom (Jpn. *chi* 智, Skt. *prajñā*), in which there is no distinguishing, no past, no future, no color, sound, taste, touch, sensation, or thought. And, though we may know about this possibility, we only recognize and understand through practice how far the power of silence extends. To know this we must listen with our whole body and mind.

The Dialectic of the Three Vows as an Expression of Shinran's Religious Experience

Takanori Sugioka

Ryukoku University, Kyoto

PREFACE

One of the characteristics of Shinran's thought is its great emphasis on interior religious awareness and experience. Leaving behind the traditional framework of communal practice, and instead seeing himself directly in light of the cosmic reality of Buddhist awakening, Shinran articulated a vision of self-realization based upon the overturning of the ego-self and the awakening of the deepest reality of the self as cosmic personality. In the traditional terms of Buddhist philosophy, this can be understood as being fully in accord with the core teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Perhaps the most important of the core teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism is that all beings may attain buddhahood. According to Buddhistologist Junjiro Takakusu, "The Buddha is the completion of personality on a cosmic scale."¹ The complete cosmic personality is that which, having overcome the dualistic orientation of the self-centered ego that is based in delusion and blind passions, manifests the heart and mind of one who transcends this visible universe in both time and space. The vast mind of the Buddha refers to a compassion that is based in non-dual wisdom. The great compassionate one sees the suffering of all other beings as inseparable from self, is aware of the equality of all things, and manifests the wisdom of the Buddha that sees the unhindered working of dharma in all things. The Buddha brings to fruition non-dual wisdom as it necessarily appears as great compassion at work in all sentient beings.

It is likewise with Shinran's Shin Buddhism. That is, the path to enlightenment and buddhahood is to express the right wisdom and

compassion; it is not the path of extreme asceticism or petitionary prayer. According to Shinran, in *mappō*, the final degenerate age of the dharma, the only path to attain non-dual wisdom is to “attain the true and real entrusting”² of the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life, that is, Amida Buddha. True entrusting comes from the pure mind of the Buddha that is free from the doubt and blind passion of sentient beings, “the mind that leads sentient beings to unsurpassed nirvana,”³ the mind that has already been directed towards and bestowed upon all sentient beings. Sentient beings awaken to the compassionate mind of the Buddha in the form of the forty-eight vows created by Amida while still in the stage of bodhisattvahood with compassion and mercy for all.

In general, the religious turning over of mind is called “metanoëia” (*eshin* 廻心). However, Shinran states, “Metanoëia is the overturning of self power [into other power].”⁴ Self-power is false “reliance on one’s body, mind, ability, and supposed virtues.”⁵ Thus, the attainment of true entrusting is to turn over self-power by virtue of the Buddha’s great compassion.

Through such an experience, the old Shinran died, and the new Shinran was born, one who irrevocably set forth on the path to the completion of cosmic personality.

THE *LOCUS CLASSICUS* OF THE DIALECTIC OF THE THREE VOWS

Shinran writes very little about his own personal life. We have very little biographical information about him, and ideas concerning the hardships he faced in his religious quest are largely inferential. Most of his statements concern his existential state and relate the sense of his living deeply in gratitude to the Buddha’s great compassion and the profound karmic evil of his existence as a foolish being illuminated by the Buddha’s infinite light. One of the few places where he writes personally can be found in the “Chapter on the Transformed Land” of his magnum opus, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* (The True Teaching Practice, *Shinjin*, and Realization), where he briefly describes the process of his religious transformation:

Thus I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Sakyamuni, through reverently accepting the exposition of [Master Vasubandhu,] author of the Treatise, and depending on the guidance of Master [Shan-tao], have forever left behind the temporary gate of the myriad practices, the various good acts, and the birth attained beneath the twin Sala trees.

Turning about, I entered the true gate of the root of good and the root of virtue, and wholeheartedly awakened the mind leading to the birth that is inconceivable.

I have now decisively left behind the “true” gate of provisional means and, [my self-power] overturned, have entered the ocean of the selected Vow. Having swiftly become free of the mind leading to the birth that is difficult to conceive, I am assured of attaining the birth that is inconceivable. How truly profound in intent is the Vow that beings ultimately attain birth!

Having forever entered the ocean of the Vow, I now realize deeply the Buddha’s benevolence.⁶

This has come to be known as the passage on the “dialectic of the three vows.” The three vows are the nineteenth, twentieth, and eighteenth vows, in that order, that Shinran identifies as the key sequence among the forty-eight vows originally made by Amida Buddha while in the stage of bodhisattvahood. Thus, they are called the “original vows” of Amida Buddha, and in particular, the eighteenth vow (“the ocean of the selected vow”) is regarded as the key, *the* original vow of Amida Buddha, into which the nineteenth (“the provisional gate of myriad practices”) and the twentieth (“the true gate of the root of all good and virtue”) flow. In Shin Buddhism, undergirding all three vows is the practice of intoning the name of Amida Buddha, “*namu Amida Butsu*,” which means, “I entrust myself to the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life,” or more dynamically in terms of the impersonal dimension of the formless body of the dharma (*hōshin* 法身, Skt. *dharmakāya*), “I entrust myself to the Awakening of Infinite Light and Eternal Life.” The act of intoning the name is also called *nenbutsu* (念仏, Ch. *nianfo*, Skt. *buddhānusmṛti*), or literally, “remembering the Buddha.”

Furthermore, Shinran states that the standpoint of these three vows corresponds to the teachings of the *Meditation Sutra* (nineteenth vow), the *Amida Sutra* (twentieth vow), and the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* (eighteenth vow). Furthermore, he states that, in relation to the *Meditation Sutra* and the *Amida Sutra*, there is an “exoteric and esoteric significance” that is explicated before the passage on the dialectic of the three vows. The exoteric meaning is the explicit teaching of each of these respective sutras. The esoteric meaning is the teaching of the *Larger Sutra* that underlies that of each of the other two sutras. The idea that the former two sutras each have both an exoteric and an esoteric meaning can only be derived by having realized and internalized

the significance of the eighteenth vow as the core of the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*.

In modern scholarship, the dialectic of the three vows has been analyzed from a number of different perspectives including that of Western philosophy, depth psychology, and so forth. Several of these studies focus on the question as to whether the unfolding of this dialectic represents and therefore corresponds to Shinran's own religious experience. This leads to further questions about the timing of each stage of the dialectic in relation to specific moments in Shinran's life. Here I would like to offer my own interpretation for consideration.

The text of the three vows found in the *Larger Sutra* is as follows:

Nineteenth vow: "If, when I attain buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten directions give rise to the mind of aspiration for enlightenment, cultivate the various practices and virtues, with sincere mind express the bodhisattva vows, and desire to be born in my Pure [Land], and if I fail to appear along with a throng of bodhisattvas and other deities before the practitioner at the time his or her death, then I refuse to attain enlightenment."⁷

Twentieth vow: "If, when I attain buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten directions hear my Name, turn their thoughts to my [Pure] Land, cultivate the various practices and virtues, with sincere mind direct their virtues to all beings, desire to be born in my [Pure] Land, and fail to realize the fruits of their labors, then I refuse to attain enlightenment."⁸

Eighteenth vow: "If, when I attain buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten directions, with sincere mind and true entrusting, desire to be born in my [Pure] Land, and say my Name even ten times, and fail to be born there, then I refuse to attain enlightenment."⁹

In the following sections, I will explain the basic doctrinal understanding of the three vows.

Nineteenth Vow

According to the nineteenth vow, practitioners follow both meditative (visualizations) and non-meditative practices, as well as the chanting of the name, or *nenbutsu*. The path to birth in the Pure Land

of Amida Buddha according to this vow is called “birth under the twin Sala trees,” due to the fact that the practitioner, following the path of sages and all of its difficult practices, seeks to replicate the life of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni who, upon completing his path in this world, passed into nirvana, or the Pure Land, under the twin Sala trees.

This is also known as the vow of “appearing at the time of death.” That is because one who has followed the path of sages and fulfilled all of one’s practices with a pure heart, according to the Pure Land teachings, will be greeted at the time of death by Amida Buddha, the retinue of bodhisattvas and other deities, who appear before the practitioner to welcome him or her into the Pure Land. Yet, as Shinran states, “How hard it is to cultivate the meditative practices due to the mind of that is filled with thoughts of doubt. The various other practices are also hard to cultivate due to the harmful disturbance of good practices.”¹⁰ The result is that, rather than having the peace of mind that accompanies birth into the Pure Land, the practitioner is overcome with fear of death. Unable to see the Pure Land, the practitioner desperately calls out the Buddha’s name, but as Shinran suggests, such a practitioner ends up reborn in the “land of sloth.”¹¹ Nevertheless, he also suggests that the deeper significance of the nineteenth vow is that it is designed to encourage the follower of the path of sages to seek out the mercy and compassion of Amida Buddha.

Twentieth Vow

As described in the *Amida Sutra*, the follower of the twentieth vow abandons all of the sundry practices and focuses single-mindedly on chanting the name of Amida Buddha in order to direct the merit of this practice towards birth in the Pure Land. Also called the vow of “birth difficult to conceive,” the problem with this is that the follower, through one’s own human calculations, attempts to attain the Pure Land, which is by definition inconceivable. Thus, the greater the effort made by the practitioner, the more difficult it becomes: “Because one seeks to cultivate one’s own roots of good by means of the Buddha’s Name, one fails to attain true entrusting and the Buddha’s wisdom.”¹² It is as though one is attempting to usurp the Buddha’s name by attempting to attain birth through one’s own power, when it is truly only the Buddha’s power that leads to birth, that is, the power arising spontaneously from the formless *dharmakāya*, emptiness itself. Such a one manifests the “mind of reifying one’s karmic evil and blessing,”¹³

shin zai fuku shin, as if one could control karmic evil and the blessings of faith with one's own ego: "They have been enveloped in self-attachment unawares, and do not approach fellow practitioners and true teacher (*zenchishiki* 善知識, Skt. *kalyānamitra*)."¹⁴ Shinran calls such a person "the practitioner of self power *nenbutsu*" who is destined to be reborn in the "land of doubt."¹⁵

Nevertheless, Shinran finds positive significance in this path as well, since it brings one closer to the ultimate mode of practice, in which one abandons one's futile ego-centered attempts to attain birth: "Renunciants and householders both should quickly enter 'the true gate of the complete practice and ultimate virtue' (so-called) and thus seek 'birth in the Pure Land difficult to conceive.'"¹⁶ Thus, the twentieth vow is the skillful means to compassionately lead the practitioner into the universal vow, the eighteenth.

Eighteenth Vow

The eighteenth vow is called the "vow of the ultimate mind of true entrusting," representing the standpoint of "inconceivable birth." It is the vow that contains the three aspects of true entrusting, of the "sincere mind, true entrusting, and desire for birth (in the Pure Land)," and is predicated on just ten repetitions of the name of Amida. Traditionally, this vow has been understood in terms of the practitioner, who having internalized these three aspects attains the full flower of truly entrusting to the vow of Amida and attains inconceivable birth in the Pure Land. However, Shinran states that deluded "sentient beings, filled with blind passion, do not have an ounce of truth or sincerity in their hearts and minds."¹⁷

Rather, for Shinran, the deeper truth is that Amida has already bestowed the mind of true entrusting to sentient beings by virtue of the great vow, in precisely the form that they can accept and embrace, as the name, "*namu Amida Butsu*." Thus, it is not that the practitioner calls out to Amida ten times, but that it is Amida Buddha who calls out to us, "the directive to respond to the Original Vow."¹⁸

The key here is that, in chanting the name, in that very chanting practitioners are called to hear deeply the voiceless voice of Amida's vow. In thus hearing the name, the practitioner attains the "stage of non-retrogression of the rightly settled." That is, one attains the stage equivalent to the Buddha, of not falling back on the path of practice,

settled firmly in one's destiny to be born in the Pure Land. One is thus "turned into" the vessel of Amida's great compassion.

As we have just seen, the dialectic of the three vows takes one through the progression from the nineteenth to the twentieth and finally on to the eighteenth. At each stage, one abandons the problematic practices and attitudes of the previous stage in order to move on and eventually attain the full flowering of the eighteenth. However, the entire process is sustained and illuminated by the power of the eighteenth vow, enabling one to turn over the mind of self-power and enter into the ocean of the vow of other-power. In this sense, each stage has its own positive significance on the path to inconceivable birth.

JINEN: LED TO BECOME SO THROUGH OTHER-POWER

According to Shinran, "Other power is the power of the Buddha's Original Vow."¹⁹ It is the power of Amida to bring religious benefit to all sentient beings. Amida Buddha is not an entity in some distant place but the deepest, truest reality of each person such that other-power, being other-than-ego, "fills the hearts and minds of all beings":²⁰ "Other power is the power to truly entrust oneself to the Eighteenth Vow specially selected (for foolish beings like us), grasping us, never to let go, so that we may say the Name and attain birth in the Pure Land."²¹

One of the key concepts for understanding the process of entering into the ocean of the vow of other power is *jinen* (自然), "led to become so." *Jinen* is composed of two characters, *ji* or "self," and *nen* or "so," as in "just so." *Ji* as self has the dual meaning of a particular self, as in "you" or "me," as well as universal self, as in "other-power." *Nen* as "so" has the meaning of being "just so," in the sense of something just as it is, and carries a sense of spontaneity, as when we speak of a person "just being himself."

Ji and *nen* together, then, carry the sense of a person being just so, him- or herself, illuminated, embraced, and dissolved into the flow of the universal self, other-power. Here, the particular self and the universal self come together seamlessly in the spontaneously flow of the suchness of "so"-ness of reality. That is, the Shin practitioner, in saying the name, is borne forth on the name as other-power, and the awakening of true entrusting is realized spontaneously in the unfolding of the reality of "led to become so." According to Shinran,

Ji is "to become so." "To become so" is *jinen*. (More deeply), *jinen* means "led to become so." "Led to become so" means that the practitioner

from the beginning, without any (ego-centered) calculation, has all karmic sin of past, present, and future turned over and transformed into good (beyond calculation). “Turned over” means that this good is realized without eliminating karmic sin. It is just as all the waters (of creeks and rivers) enter into the great ocean without being lost.²²

From this we can see that this “turning over” that transforms karmic evil into the great compassion of the Buddha occurs through *jinen*, “made to become so.” It is the process by which self-power is turned over and transformed into other-power, where self-power is not eliminated. Rather, like the waters entering into the great ocean, self-power is transformed into other-power by the power of other-power leading it into the ocean.

THE DIALECTIC OF THE THREE VOWS IN THE HERE-AND-NOW

The passage on the dialectic of the three vows cited at the beginning of the paper, which marks Shinran’s religious experience of entering into the other-power of the eighteenth vow, ends with the statement, “Having *forever* entered the ocean of the Vow, I *now* realize deeply the Buddha’s benevolence” (italics mine).²³ Here, I would like to consider the relation between the meaning of “now” and “forever” as found in this passage. As Oka states, we may consider the entirety of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, from which this statement is taken, as the systematic expression of this single moment of religious experience, then the “now” of this passage signifies the moment of Shinran entrusting himself to the original vow of Amida.²⁴

Of course, it is not as if the fully articulated understanding of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was present to Shinran in that moment of experience. It took many decades for him to differentiate his experience into the logical and systematic expression of his magnum opus. If, however, it can be said that religious experience is at the core of what may be considered a sacred text, then the “now” of the moment of Shinran receiving the transmission of the teachings from Hōnen, as expressed in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, is creatively unfolding at this very moment.

It is not the case that the moment of entering into the dialectic of the three vows took place eight hundred years ago when Shinran was twenty-nine, and that we merely attempt to re-experience that moment vicariously. Such a view reduces that experience into a superficial moment of nostalgia. Historians such as Takehiko Furuta have sought to establish the historical dating for Shinran’s experience of

the dialectic of the three vows, citing the decade when Shinran was between the ages of forty-two and fifty-two. Of course, as a historical personage, Shinran must have had his own experience separate from ours. However, to discern the religious significance of the “now” of the passage in question, and thus of the dialectic of the three vows itself, one must see this “now” present in the here-and-now of our present awareness. Otherwise, we lose the one-time character of this moment of entering into the dialectic of the three vows.

Historically, the “one-time” character of Shinran’s metanoia is a temporal matter, having occurred in 1201 at Yoshimizu as a follower of Hōnen. However, the true religious meaning of this “one time” is that it is always present in the here-and-now. It is a “one time” that is repeated continuously; it is the “one time” from that moment in history that is reappropriated or re-realized in every moment of the here-and-now. Rather than a nostalgic reflection on the past, the true appreciation of the “now” is a forward-looking, dynamic now that is open to everyone. Takamaro Shigaraki expresses this in terms of a Buddhist view of time:

Shinran’s experience of entrusting himself to the Original Vow and his attainment of true entrusting is, within a temporal framework, one that stands on the absolute present, a present that includes all of the future and all of the past. Similarly, continual unfolding of his realization is one that actually began in the beginningless past, that is, “forever in the past,” and that continues endlessly into the future with the present as its fulcrum, a present that is a continuity of discontinuity. The frame of mind in which the absolute present of this continuity-*qua*-discontinuity unfolds is that of abandoning self power to entrust oneself to the Original Vow, to enter into the ocean of the vow. Although true entrusting to the Vow occurred in the beginningless past, one is paradoxically also looking forward to abandoning self power, where this “already, but not yet” frame of mind unfolds in the absolute present, continuously repeating itself moment by moment.²⁵

The awareness that the moment of true entrusting (*shinjin* 信心) is continually re-established in the past *and* continually realized in the absolute “now” reflects a dynamic understanding of Shinran’s religious awareness. Furthermore, the sense of “forever” may be understood to express not just the sense of the beginningless past but also the endless future, reflecting a forward-looking orientation. However, all of this comes to light in the “now” as the absolute present, reinforcing, as

Shigaraki states, the framework of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as the logical, systematic expression of Shinran's moment of the attainment of *shinjin*.

IS THE DIALECTIC OF THE THREE VOWS A NECESSARY PROGRESSION?

Is the dialectic of the three vows a necessary progression in the process of religious awakening? As noted before, there are both positive and negative aspects to the nineteenth and twentieth vows. The view that seeks to affirm these self-power vows as steps towards enlightenment itself reflects a self-power mentality. From the standpoint of the eighteenth vow, however, even within the modalities of the various and sundry practices (nineteenth vow) and the self-power *nenbutsu* (twentieth vow), the great compassion of the Buddha is at work at the deepest level of reality (eighteenth vow). As Shinran states in the *Hymns on the Pure Land*,

Those who say the Name in self-power, whether meditative or non-meditative—
Having indeed taken refuge in the Vow that beings ultimately attain birth—
Will spontaneously, even without being taught,
Turn about and enter the gate of suchness.²⁶

The first line refers to the nineteenth vow, the second to the twentieth vow, and the third and fourth to the eighteenth. “To be led,” *jinen*, indicates the working of other-power, and “true suchness” is nirvana. Thus, Shinran is telling the reader that, as the practitioner of the nineteenth vow progresses, one enters into the twentieth vow, and this eventually leads to the unfolding of the vow-power that leads the practitioner to become so, *jinen*, that is, the suchness of nirvana. From this one can see the logical necessity of the progression through the vows. Insofar as the eighteenth vow is described as that which is “turned into” dialectically, the preceding stages of the nineteenth and twentieth vows become necessary within the framework of *upāya*, skillful means (*hōben* 方便). As Genpō Hoshino states, the formulation of all three vows share the phrase, “sentient beings of the ten directions.”²⁷ This makes it clear that the dialectic applies to all beings. Thus, Hoshino continues, “In order to sever the blind passions, one must pass through the progression of the Nineteenth, Twentieth, and Eighteenth Vows.”²⁸

The eighteenth vow is designed specifically for the karmic propensity of real human beings living in history who exhibit a powerful desire to reduce everything to the terms of their own egos. Shinran dem-

onstrates this himself, in both having been bound by self-power blind passions and by his turn into the other-power of the eighteenth vow. Thus the very universality of “sentient beings of the ten directions” is realized through the singular particularity of “For myself, Shinran, alone.”²⁹ Conversely, while the dialectic of the three vows is an expression of Shinran’s highly particular life, the fact that he traversed the three vows expresses its necessity and universality as the working of the Buddha’s vow.

However, when we turn to the concrete instructions Shinran provided to his followers, we find no mention of the dialectic of the three vows. What we do find are descriptions of the practice of the *nenbutsu*, the intoning of the name of Amida: “Those who feel uncertain about attaining birth in the Pure Land should say the Onembutsu.”³⁰ In this passage, the honorific “O” is added to “*nenbutsu*,” indicating that this is the *nenbutsu* of the eighteenth vow, not self-power *nenbutsu*.

Again, in a letter by his wife Eshinni, we find the following: “As for Kurizawa, he has taken up the practice of continuous nembutsu in the mountain temple of Nozumi where he has chosen the practice of intoning the Name.”³¹ Kurizawa refers to Shinran’s son Shinrenbō Myōshin. The practice of continuous *nenbutsu* (*fudan nenbutsu* 不斷念佛) refers to the chanting of the name characteristic of the nineteenth vow, in which it is carried out in conjunction with various other practices in preparation for the arrival of Amida Buddha and his throng at the time of death to welcome the practitioner into the Pure Land. In this case, perhaps Shinrenbō was attempting to retrace the religious path taken by his father.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary world, can something like the dialectic of the three vows be considered in any way to be practiceable? Are there people around today who practice the path of sages, practitioners of the self-power sundry practices, or the practitioners of self-power *nenbutsu*, those whom Shinran criticized so severely in his day? The statement that the Buddha’s compassion showers upon even those of self-power practice seems utterly irrelevant. This renders meaningless the idea that the dialectic of the three vows must be realized in practice. Of course, these ideas may still be somewhat applicable if we can reformulate them in a more general way. For example, in terms of religious metanoia, one can certainly argue that there are those who undergo

gradual conversion as well as those who enter faith in a dramatic and sudden manner. Superficially, this is a temporal matter of long versus short, but deeper inquiry reveals that it concerns the transformation of self-power into other-power. In this regard, the dialectic of the three vows both logically and psychologically describes a necessary process, religiously speaking.

Nevertheless, there remains a doubt concerning its contemporary application. This is related to the fact that Shinran spent one hundred days consecutively in attendance with Hōnen imbibing the latter's teaching, and no doubt chanting the name of Amida Buddha throughout this period, something that remains distant to most contemporary peoples. The fact remains that the only way to realize the *nenbutsu* in the working of the Buddha's wisdom is to chant the name for oneself. Chanting the name is not self-power. True realization occurs through the cultivation of the right non-dual wisdom.

NOTES

1. Junjiro Takakusu, *Bukkyō no Shinzui* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shinchō-sha, 1978), 87–88.
2. Shinran, “Chapter on *Shinjin*,” *Kyōgyōshinshō* (The True Teaching Practice, *Shinjin*, and Realization), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 2 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), 47; and Shinran, *Collected Works of Shinran*, 2 vols. (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1977), 1:77.
3. Shinran, *Yuishinshō mon’i* (Notes on “Essentials of Faith Alone”), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:633; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:464.
4. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:628; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:459.
5. Shinran, *Ichinentanen mon’i* (Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 614; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:485.
6. “Chapter on the Transformed Land,” *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 166 and *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:240.
7. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:144; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:208.
8. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:158; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:229.
9. “Chapter on *Shinjin*,” *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:48–49; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:80.
10. “Chapter on the Transformed Land,” *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:154; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:223.
11. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:146; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:211.
12. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:165; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:239.
13. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:165; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:239.
14. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:157; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:228. See also *Sangyō ōjō monrui* (A Collection of Passages on the Types of Birth in the Three Pure Land Sutras), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:557; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:648.
15. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:158, 165; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:229, 239. See also *Sangyō ōjō monrui*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:558–559; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 2:651–652.
16. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:157; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:228.
17. Shinran, *Songō shinzō meimon* (Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:560; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:493.
18. “Chapter on Practice,” *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:22; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:38.
19. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:38; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:61.
20. Shinran, *Yuishinshō mon’i*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:630; *Collected Works of*

Shinran, 1:461.

21. Shinran, *Goshōsokushū* (A Collection of Letters), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:658; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:525.

22. *Yuishinshō mon'i*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:623; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:454.

23. “Chapter on the Transformed Land,” *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 154; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:223.

24. Ryōji Oka, “*Kyōgyōshinshō* josetsu: Shinran no shin no kozō,” *Shinshū gaku* 75–76 (1987): 23.

25. Takamaro Shigaraki, “Shinran ni okeru sangan-tennyu no ronri,” *Ryūko daigaku ronshū* 434–435 (1989): 90.

26. Shinran, *Jōdo Wasan* (Hymns on the Pure Land), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:493; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:343.

27. Genpō Hoshino, *Jōdo* (Kyoto: Hōzokan, 1957), 110.

28. *Ibid.*, 110.

29. See *Tannishō* (A Record in Lament of Divergences), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:752; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:695.

30. Shinran, *Goshōsokushū*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:697; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:561.

31. Eshinni, *Eshinni shōsoku*, in *Jōdo Shinshū seiten* (Kyoto: Hongwanji shuppansha, 2004), 826.

Listening to the Buddha's Noble Truths: A Method to Alleviate Social Suffering

Veena R. Howard

University of Oregon

THE MAIN CONCERN OF THE Buddha's teachings is to ease human suffering (*dukkha*) manifesting itself in physical and mental *dis-ease*. The Pāli word "*dukkha*" generally is translated as "suffering," but it literally means an "uneasy" or "unwanted feeling" (Skt. *pratikūlavedanā*, unpleasant agony or sensation).¹ The Buddha presents an *upāya* (approach) with a systematic range of physical, psychological, and moral practices that are required for the development of *kusala* (apposite moral conduct). These means provide an individual with the ability to wield and eventually transcend the human predicament. Scholar Padmasiri de Silva succinctly describes this. "The doctrine of the Buddha clearly accommodates the interlacing of the psychological and the ethical aspects of behavior.... The development of virtue is not merely blind adherence to rules, but the development of certain type of skill (*kusala*)."² The Buddha's urgent call to listen deeply to the reality and cause of *dukkha* and his pragmatic means to transcend it resonated with the religious people of India and continues to guide the lives of millions across a multitude of cultures.

Even though the Buddha's diagnosis of the present human condition is apparently bleak, and his ethical and contemplative disciplines seem to focus on the ultimate end to *dukkha*, his techniques have also been utilized for the purpose of constructing methods to address worldly human afflictions. Thus, in modern times, the value and purpose of the Buddha's strategy have been evaluated in a broader context, including various fields—from psychology and psychotherapy to mediation and communication. Specifically, in the field of psychotherapy, in spite of its presuppositions (which are different from those of

the Buddha's), several Buddhist techniques have been utilized for the purpose of alleviating human misery apparent in symptoms of anxiety, identity crisis, depression, etc. In this paper I seek to explore the relevance of Buddha's call to listen deeply to the *truth* of suffering and his method to remove suffering, specifically the prescribed principles of renunciation and ethical regimen, in the context of addressing social suffering. I ask whether the Buddha's methods of ameliorating suffering could also be applied to the purpose of curing the ills of society. More precisely, could his principles of morality, which essentially are meant to transform an individual and overcome the metaphysical reality of *dukkha*, be directed to remove the existential forms of suffering—personal and social? For the purpose of examining these queries, I take Mahatma Gandhi, a twentieth-century political leader, as a model who was inspired by the Buddha and also by the teachings of Hinduism. In his writings, Gandhi portrayed the Buddha, the embodiment of renunciation, as a socially concerned activist, and chose to apply ethical and renunciatory principles as tools to treat his own physical and mental infirmity, as well as to address social ills present in the forms of gender and race inequality, social injustice, and oppression.

First, it must be noted that, as understood within the Indian context, Buddhism and Hinduism, in spite of some varied doctrines, do not represent distinct systems of belief, which is the interpretation that Gandhi asserts.³ The ideologies of both religions not only share historical roots but have also shared philosophical and ritual spaces. The relationship between Hinduism and Buddhism has been reciprocal and reflects the ability of *deep listening* that leads to reformation of the individual self as well as the society. The Buddha's fundamental teaching of the reality of *dukkha* and his methods to alleviate suffering not only presented an alternative to the existing methods to approach the predicament of life, but also reshaped the ailing cultural and religious norms within Hinduism of the time. In turn, later Buddhism was remolded—in its philosophy and techniques—by Hindu culture. Gandhi's philosophy of ascetic-activism—constituted upon the ideologies of these traditions for his purpose of personal and social reform—is an example of these syncretistic tendencies. Not surprisingly, Gandhi in his actions of social service and his methods of nonviolence has been compared to the Buddha. Gandhi's religio-political methods (which were different from the customary methods of confrontation) to address the social problems of slavery, discrimination, and injustice re-

flect his propensity for the practice of ethical disciplines and a capacity for *deep listening*.

DEEP LISTENING: A PREREQUISITE

In the ancient texts of Hinduism one of the preliminary steps for the purpose of realizing the truth of reality or attainment of spiritual freedom is *śravaṇa*, meaning “listening”—listening to the scriptures and the words of the guru.⁴ The Sanskrit word “*śravaṇa*” is derived from a root verb, *√śru*, which literally means “to hear, to listen, to be attentive, and to attend upon.”⁵ Listening is not merely hearing but attentive listening with a focused and attentive mind. This type of listening requires a kind of *antaḥ-karṇa-suddhi*—purity of the mind and heart achieved through fundamental precepts—where selfish concerns drop away. Deep listening leads to understanding of the teachings and ultimately to the realization of the truth of the reality of one’s own self and those around us. Buddha often asked for the attention of the monks. His discourses were often preceded by this refrain: “Listen carefully, O *bhikkhus!*” In fact, the entire Pāli canon is a record of the deep listening by the monks who recited the entire canon after the *parinirvāṇa* (the ultimate liberation) of the Buddha. (The canon was passed down orally for hundreds of years before it was written down.) The phrase “Thus I have heard” often introduces the sermons of the Buddha.⁶

Deep listening in personal spiritual development requires faith, receptivity, and cognitive discernment, and in an interpersonal context—such as communication—it calls for empathy. Joseph Bailey differentiates between hearing and listening:

Hearing is a physiological phenomenon while listening is a psychological state. To listen deeply is to perceive beyond mere words and gestures. Without analyzing, we sense the underlying feelings and meanings; we understand the subtler level of communication. When we are listening deeply, we are affected and touched by the other person. And for the moment we are changed.⁷

Many therapists, counselors, and mediators incorporate deep listening and other Buddhist principles of mindfulness and compassion in their respective fields.⁸ I suggest that the significance of deep listening to the Buddha’s teaching of suffering also has the same significance for social healing. Even though his ideology of the ubiquitous nature of *dukkha* and the Buddha’s own life of renunciation may appear to be

“world-denying,” an attentive listening to this reality opens an avenue to address social suffering.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING
TO A BROAD REALIZATION OF ITS REALITY

The Buddha elaborates on the first noble truth of suffering in his sermon, *Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth (Dhamma). Dukkham ariyasaccam—dukkha* is the truth (reality)—the Buddha’s great proclamation:

The Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*) is this: Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant [persons or objects] is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant [persons or objects] is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering—in brief, the five aggregates [five groups of clinging that form the object of attachment, the notions of I, mine, and self] are suffering.⁹

The Buddha presents a systematic list of various possibilities of suffering that can be categorized into three types: physical (pain, privation, and discomfort), mental (the discrepancy between our illusion and reality, the disappointments), and realization that clinging to one’s personality or individuality is suffering.¹⁰ For the Buddha the existence of *dukkha* is the existential and verifiable truth and makes up the core of his life and thought. The Buddha’s claim leads us to construe the Buddha’s view of life that suffering is ubiquitous: “all created things are sorrowful and transitory.”¹¹ One may ask: if our entire existence is, by its very nature, enveloped by the dark shadow of *dukkha*, is there even a possibility of addressing the issue of removing mental and social suffering? What was the Buddha’s purpose to assert the grim reality of suffering unlike some of his counterparts who focused on the positive ways to explain the reality of the universe? Does this stated fact behoove us to choose a life of renunciation similar to that of the Buddha? For these queries it is essential to listen to the Buddha’s life story.

The account of the life of Siddhārtha Gautama (who later came to be known as the Buddha) tells us that as a youth he was very sensitive and restless with his life and surroundings, leaving no choice for the his father, the king, but to keep watch over him lest he decide to escape. Fortunately, during some of his excursions from the palace, his personal experience of suffering in the form of three separate sights of physical suffering—death, disease, and decrepitude—led Siddhārtha

to embark on a journey to understand reality. Generally, in this world most experience pain, death, old age, and suffering, but continue with their daily lives in the hope of betterment of their situation. However, Siddhārtha was unusually agitated by these sights of “physical suffering.” In the Freudian idiom, he was suffering from “reality anxiety.”¹² Siddhārtha’s reaction was unusual. He was not in pain physically (he was a prince with good health and opulent wealth), but the thought of what the future held for him and his loved ones—the trauma of old age and certain death—haunted him. Anxious to find the cause and cure of suffering, Siddhārtha left home in the middle of the night. Under the spell of his own neurosis about suffering, he didn’t hesitate to turn his back on the grief of his devoted wife, the cries of his innocent child, and the laments of his loving father. In his choice of renunciation, Siddhārtha turned a cold shoulder to his family obligations and his princely duties. Disregarding familial concerns, Siddhārtha chose the life of a wandering ascetic intent upon discovering the cause of suffering and a method to stop its vicious cycle.

Siddhārtha’s “great renunciation” from family, social, and political life and his arduous search for the end of suffering through the practice of various outer and inner disciplines comes to fruition in his *bodhi* (awakening). His awakening was unique, however. He was not awakened to a transcendent reality (such as *brahman*) or to a glorious realm of heavenly gods, but he was awakened to a disturbing revelation of the reality of suffering (*dukkha*) and impermanence (*anicca*). However, his revelation was not entirely of a hopeless nature; it included the cause of suffering rooted in selfish desires as well as the way to attain release from the cycle of suffering (classified as the four noble truths).¹³ Various sources of the Buddha’s life story tell us that with his awakening to reality, he also became filled with *karuṇā* (compassion). In his deep silence he contemplated the sounds of suffering that surround *samsara*. Breaking his prolonged serene silence, the Buddha set out to share his realization with his fellow beings in the hope that listeners would also be able to rid themselves of the arrow of suffering. The only way to alleviate this “uneasy” feeling manifesting itself in physical and mental suffering is to eliminate *taṇhā* (selfish cravings), the root cause of *dukkha*, by following the eightfold path.

RECONCILING THE REALITY OF SUFFERING AND EFFORTS IN HEALING

Apparently, the Buddha, through his truth of *dukkha*, conveys to us the tenet that living means suffering. For example, in the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha recommends the path of a recluse. His renunciation of the worldly life accordingly presents an approach for his fellow beings to lead a life of seclusion and tranquility away from the worldly quagmire. The experience of ultimate freedom presupposes the life of a mendicant who is intent on realizing the end of personal *dukkha*. According to him, those who choose this path “do not delight in an abode; like swans who have left their lake, they leave their house and home.”¹⁴ Although the Buddha taught both the lay and renunciate, his approach to ending the cycle of *dukkha* required a life of worldly detachment. The path of a householder (representing worldly engagement) is considered a path defiled by passions leading to suffering, and the path of renunciation a path of freedom from suffering.

The following four aspects of the Buddha’s life and teaching seems to inspire his followers to give up a life of worldly engagement: his own renunciation of the family life, his invitation to a life of seclusion, his advocacy for urgency in getting out of the cycle of *samsara*—the world of change and flux¹⁵—and his disciplinary and contemplative practices (*śīla* and *dhyāna*) for going beyond the entrapment of individual self or ego. Taken together these affirm that living and getting involved in this world reinvigorates ego and selfish cravings (*taṇhā*). Relief from *dukkha* is achieved by renouncing this-worldly life of family and social relations. The “homeless” (*bhikkhu*) ideal and the Buddha’s establishment of the organized community of mendicants (*sangha*) are representative of his renunciatory ideology.

Due to his overt declaration of the ever-present nature of suffering in *samsara*, Buddha has been accused of a pessimistic attitude and indifference to the existential suffering of day-to-day life. However, it would be naive to construe, on the basis of his truth of suffering and his personal renunciation, that the Buddha was unconcerned with the existential form of suffering, leaving no optimism for bringing comfort for worldly physical, mental, and social ailments. A deep listening to the Buddha’s life and his insight into the nature of suffering offers significant counsel in various situations of life. Therefore, several components of the Buddha’s path leading to ultimate freedom from *dukkha* have been applied to address suffering of various forms—mental, physical, psychological, and social. The Buddhist psychophysical tech-

niques, including mindfulness and meditation, have been successfully applied to resolve mental ailments, conflicts, and even physical health issues.

In the following section I focus particularly on the therapeutic application of the Buddha's program in the pragmatic context—social suffering—with a modern day example, Mahātmā Gandhi, a political and social activist. The Buddha's life and his renunciatory teachings (which were similar to other Indian religious traditions) inspired Gandhi to confront his personal neurosis and to bring relief to the people of India suffering from an "identity crisis," slothfulness, and slavery.¹⁶ Even though the Buddha and Gandhi appear to be very different figures, the narrative of the Buddha's journey to find a cure for *dukkha* carries similarities to the incidents that led Gandhi to commit himself to confront the social suffering of humanity. Gandhi's ideology of activism that combined the elements of asceticism for social activism draws attention to the following points: (1) the elements of renunciation offer a strategy to confront social suffering; (2) the Buddha's strategy of transcending *taṇhā* offers a therapeutic solution to various forms of suffering; and (3) the embodiment of asceticism itself becomes instrumental in the efforts to confront suffering caused by social systems.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE BUDDHA AND GANDHI'S JOURNEY TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING: A COMPARISON

As we mentioned earlier, due to his personal life of renunciation and choice of non-violent methods, Mahātmā Gandhi has been often compared to the Buddha.¹⁷ On the surface, however, these two personalities resemble each other neither in their personages nor in their actions. One critic says:

Outwardly it would be hard to conceive of two individuals more different. On the one hand is the tranquil Buddha who walks serenely and calmly across the pages of history, or traditionally sits peacefully on a lotus with a gentle smile of infinite compassion.... On the other hand is the Mahātmā, speed and energy in every moment, laughing and sorrowing in his ceaseless endeavor to help mankind with the problems of human life....¹⁸

The above statement portrays the Buddha as a compassionate being but inactive, witnessing the reality of suffering in deep detachment; on the other hand, Gandhi is an activist relentlessly engaged in his venture to alleviate the suffering manifesting in the form of social in-

justice. However, this seems to be a superficial comparison: these are caricatures that exaggerate only one dimension of these figures. Was the Buddha merely a passive figure who calmly sat on a lotus immersed in his individual delight, bringing his message of the crude inevitability of suffering? Did Gandhi, who sought to help humankind with human problems, possess no composure? Then, how could Gandhi have derived inspiration from the Buddha's life of renunciation for the purpose of his endeavor to help humankind with its socio-political problems?

To understand these questions we must look at the beginnings of Gandhi's career as an activist as well as listen to his understanding of the message of the Buddha. According to Gandhi's own autobiographical records, he was raised in a middle-class family. In his early twenties, he had not thought about the ills of discrimination and slavery until he came face-to-face with "color prejudice." Gandhi suffered the most unexpected trauma while travelling on a train in South Africa, when a white man objected to his presence in the first-class compartment because he was "colored." He was an ordinary man: he was neither endowed with a charismatic personality nor was he an extraordinary barrister. In spite of the conductor's threats to "push" him out from the compartment, Gandhi refused to get off the train. Unaware of the deep color prejudice in that country, he asserted that it was his right to travel in first class because he carried a first-class ticket. Gandhi's resistance was to no avail, and the constable pushed him off the train with his luggage. Gandhi, determined to assert his right, refused to sit in the third-class compartment and the train steamed away. Humiliated and surprised, the barrister Gandhi spent the entire night in the "cold, bleak, and windswept waiting room" of the train station reflecting on that evening's incident.

The direct encounter with prejudice awakened Gandhi to a dark side of humanity: inequality and injustice of the social system manifested in forms of colonial suppression and racism, just as the Buddha was awakened to the reality of suffering through direct experience in the form of three passing sights. In the grave silence and bitter cold of the dark night Gandhi reflects on his predicament:

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India.... It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should

try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.¹⁹

The firsthand experience of the injustice of the social system also made Gandhi realize the suffering of oppressed fellow beings. This incident became the antecedent to Gandhi's commitment to a life of non-violent activism for which he eventually adopted a lifestyle similar to that of a renunciate. Later he recalls this incident as a "formative experience in this career."²⁰ Gandhi's embodiment of an ascetic for the purpose of his non-violent activism incited millions of Indians to participate in his movement for securing India's freedom from the misery of slavery and other social afflictions including untouchability. Gandhi's non-violent strategies have been experimented with in various situations throughout the world and serve as a model for an alternative method of confronting any form of social suffering.

Gandhi's sudden commitment to this colossal task was atypical. Just as the Buddha turned his back on the luxurious life of the palace, Gandhi gave up his lucrative profession and took the vows of celibacy and poverty. Gandhi's life has been a subject of vast scholarly commentary. Many scholars have speculated on possible reasons for Gandhi's behavior and subsequent decision to choose a lifestyle reminiscent of an ascetic. For example, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, in his monumental work *Gandhi's Truth*, tries to discover the roots of Gandhi's behavior in his past.²¹ Gandhi as a child was bashful and as a young man had a very sensitive conscience. Gandhi described himself as being nervous and afraid of the dark. He suffered from neurosis and had even attempted suicide. Besieged by the experience of social evil on the train, Gandhi decided to embark on rooting out the suffering. Roy Walker recounts the incident, which is reminiscent of the Buddha's final determination to find a cure for suffering.

Throughout the long hours of darkness he fought one of the decisive spiritual battles of his life. The natural impulse was to give up the unequal battle and return to India.... But there was another impulse too that told him to stay, to stay and fight. It would not be a fight for himself alone.... It was the battle for humanity itself, for all who were sick and weary and oppressed. When morning dawned his decision was made, the way ahead was clear.²²

But at the time when he made this resolve, Gandhi had not contemplated the possible methods to address the oppressive injustices of the systems of society. How could this ordinary man confront the mighty

empire on behalf of the oppressed? He was neither an eloquent orator nor an astute statesman. Nonetheless, Gandhi had spiritual foundations. In his autobiography, he recalls that he was deeply influenced by the *Light of Asia* (a book about the life and philosophy of the Buddha), the Sermon on the Mount, and the *Bhagavad Gītā*.²³ In particular, due to his predisposition and his upbringing he was attracted to the teaching of renunciation found in these texts. “The renunciation was the highest form of religion [and] appealed to me greatly.”²⁴ These teachings inspired him to choose moral-force instead of violent methods to confront social ills. For his non-violent strategy, Gandhi combined the elements of renunciation with activism.

RENUNCIATORY DISCIPLINES FOR THE *TELOS* OF ACTIVISM

“The Buddha’s main concern,” as M. G. Bhagat puts it, “was to reduce human suffering by explaining its causes; he wanted to expose evil tendencies in man and show how they could be cured.”²⁵ However, according to Gandhi, the Buddha also exposed and confronted the ills of society. The Buddha was no less concerned about the social sufferings caused by individuals possessing selfish tendencies. Gandhi remarks: “The Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the adversary’s camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood.”²⁶ Interestingly, Gandhi did not invoke the bodhisattva ideal of the Mahāyāna Buddhism, which represents the embodiment of compassion; but, rather, he presented the Buddha himself as an example of a concerned and socially involved being. The Buddha was not simply a detached figure; he was a compassionate being who dedicated his life to teaching his message to humanity. Gandhi asserts that the Buddha also worked toward the alleviation of suffering caused by oppressive systems. “When the Buddha,” Gandhi explained, “with the lamb on his shoulders, went up to the cruel Brahmins who were engaged in an animal-sacrifice, it was in no soft language that he spoke to them; he was however, all love at heart.”²⁷ Gandhi’s emphasis that the Buddha was an activist is consistent with his own unique interpretations of religious figures and texts.

According to Gandhi, the Buddha through his renunciation purified his own passions and thereby found the cure for *dukkha* for all humanity including his family. “The Buddha, by leaving his parents, brought deliverance to them as well,” asserts Gandhi.²⁸ Although Gandhi did not renounce family and the social aspects of humanity, by choosing a life of an ascetic Gandhi seems to follow the steps of the Buddha. The

Buddha's methods of personal and social reform and Gandhi's own socio-political activist strategy appear to be different in nature, yet they hold a fundamental resemblance.

The Buddha's method of getting rid of suffering includes the *pañca-śīla* (five precepts)—the principles for purification of the mind from negative tendencies. In his prescriptive approach, the Buddha emphasizes that the demons of greed, hatred, and attachment haunt the mind that needs to be purified by the practice of ethical conduct (*pañca-śīla*). “*Śīla* is a discipline of both body and mind, whereby the defilements that cloud wisdom are removed.”²⁹ The *śīla* is comprised of five essential disciplines: non-violence, truth, not taking what is not given, sexual restraint (*brahmacarya*), and abstaining from intoxicating substances. These virtues have also been prescribed for the purpose of spiritual freedom by other Indian traditions of Hinduism and Jainism for the purpose of spiritual freedom.

However, Gandhi experimented with these moral virtues as instruments for his socio-political goals and inverted the purifying power of the *pañca-śīla* for the purpose of purifying social ills. Gandhi sought to utilize these virtues, generally prescribed for achieving the ultimate liberation from *samsara*, as tools for the purpose of securing freedom from the vicious cycle of social suffering. For him, the observance of non-violence, truth, and celibacy, which have roots in the ancient religious traditions, also had functional value.

Gandhi claimed himself to be a “practical” visionary, who saw the sum value of any religious observance also in terms of its relevance for the purification of the society. He sought to apply the “technology” of ascetic disciplines—which categorically fall into the domain of religious renunciation—to address social and political issues. Even though an engagement in the socio-political issues is generally considered to be the domain of worldly engagement by orthodox ascetic traditions, for Gandhi, it provided a framework for the service of humanity. (Gandhi also likened the service of humanity to the service of God.) Gandhi asserted: “if we want to put this body in the service of truth and humanity, we must first raise our soul by developing virtues like celibacy, non-violence and truth. Then alone may we say that we are fit to render real service to the country.”³⁰

The value of these restraints has also been assessed by some scholars in the context of establishing a harmonious society. “While certain anti-social impulses that lead to the moral degradation of society

should be eliminated, the Buddha recommends the development of the socially valuable psychological qualities of self-control (*dama*), mental calm (*sama*), and restraint (*niyama*).³¹

The practice of *śīla* principles channels the mental energies to purity and calmness. Gandhi adopted the disciplines (the essential vows that he saw present in all religions)³² for his personal purification and inner empowerment and at the same time experimented with their efficacy on a mass level for purging social ills. Gandhi transformed religious virtues into activist tools such as non-cooperation, self-suffering, and passive resistance. He employed non-violence (*ahimsā*) to fight against the mighty British Empire.³³ Gandhi made a novel connection between the practice of *ahimsā*, compassion, and participatory resistance to violence: “No man could be actively nonviolent,” he pronounced, “and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred.”³⁴ He equated non-violence with compassion. “He [Gandhi] thought,” Bhikhu Parekh suggests, “even as compassion led to avoidance of harm, it could and indeed ought to lead to a positive desire to help others.”³⁵

Gandhi was aware of the Buddha’s message that violence breeds violence and keeps the cycle of hatred and fear in motion. Gandhi, who chose the means of love instead of retaliation, echoes the Buddha’s proclamation: “All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death. Likening others to oneself, one should neither slay nor cause to slay.”³⁶ Gandhi understood the weapon of non-violence to be superior to any other weapon. He declared that “the Indians...must forge a weapon which would be different from and infinitely superior to the force which the white settler commanded in such ample measure.”³⁷ Later, Gandhi coined the word for his passive resistance, *satyāgraha*, literally meaning “soul-force” or “truth-power”: an ancient ascetic way of utilizing soul-force to overcome evil and transform the heart of the evil-doer. A famous legend tells us that the Buddha himself utilized this practice to confront and transform the mind of the cruel bandit, Aṅgulimāla. The Buddha declares: “He who leads others by a procedure that is nonviolent and equitable, he is said to be a guardian of the law [*dhamma*, justice], wise and righteous.”³⁸ Only the righteous one—who seeks to conquer his or her inner negative tendencies—could be the guardian of law, none other. The path of non-violence requires overcoming the three negative forces of *rāga* (attachment), *dosa* (hatred), and *moha* (delusion). The Buddha teaches people to loosen the knot of suffering by giving up selfish desires, worldly passions, and attach-

ment to one's individuality, not by denying the world. For Gandhi, a life of renunciation simultaneously became instrumental in shattering the shackles of physical, mental, and social suffering.

THE EMBODIED RENUNCIATION AND SOCIAL HEALING

The stereotyped image of downcast eyes, pervasive in the pages of art and history, may represent the composed and complacent Buddha, but this image can also be seen as an illustration of defiance to the overly ritualistic and at times aggressive behavior of the priesthood. Walter Kaelber explains the ascetic power of protest: "The particular ascetic practice is comprehensible only in terms of the cultural practice it self-consciously seeks to challenge. Ascetic practice may, therefore, frequently be seen as an intentional language of protest."³⁹ The Buddha raised his voice against the practice of animal sacrifice and untouchability and taught the equality of all beings. Gandhi states: "One of the many things for which I revere the life of Gautama Buddha is his utter abolition of untouchability, that is, distinction between high and low."⁴⁰ By virtue of his renunciation of the caste and ties of blood, the Buddha was able to address broader social issues. The Buddha's pragmatic teachings and applications brought new life to those oppressed under draconian conventions. In her ethnographic study of *sādhus* (holy person, renunciate), Kirin Narayan observes the renunciation of "ties of blood or caste" moves the *sādhus* to the periphery of society where they are free to get involved in the service of society at large. "Ironically," states Narayan, "the act of renunciation may in fact push an ascetic into more extensive social involvement than if he or she remained a layperson."⁴¹ A renunciate who steps outside of society proper may even become a catalyst for social reform and a "dynamic center of religious development and change."⁴²

A prominent scholar Raghavan Iyer assesses the result of the Buddha's teachings: "The impact of Buddhism on the corrupt social order of India was comparable in its intensity and significance to the impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation on Europe."⁴³ During the nineteenth century, some of Gandhi's predecessors who were leaders of religious reform movements were renunciate and also social activists.⁴⁴ They incorporated religious concepts and technical vocabulary to reinvigorate their countrymen who "had fallen prey to waves of foreign rule because they had become passive, effete, and devoid of energy as a result of their sensuous and self-indulgent lifestyle."⁴⁵ Gandhi saw a

direct connection between religious renunciation and the attitude of social service. Joseph Alter comments, "Gandhi is very clear in pointing out that renunciation is worthless unless it manifests itself in selfless service and social reform."⁴⁶

For Gandhi, the composed image of the Buddha was not a symbol of indifference because of the pervasive reality of *dukkha*, but it was a symbol of the embodiment of universal compassion and concern for all beings. Inner purity must be cultivated, and the force of inner power must be redirected to defy the will of the evil-doer while cultivating "a positive state of love, doing good to even an evil doer." The Buddha teaches his listeners to replace the negative tendencies of hatred, delusion, etc. with *mettā* (love), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity). To fight against social evils, Gandhi first must purify himself from selfish cravings. Even though he never donned the robes of a renunciate, Gandhi subjected his mind and body to austere restraints for purifying the body, speech, and mind: he took the most formidable vow of *brahmacarya* (comprehensive self-restraint in thought, word, and deed) to control his sensory desires and exercise non-attachment; renounced his material belongings to a bare minimum; followed a strict vegetarian diet to harm no living entity; and restricted his intake of food and food types to control his passions and needs.⁴⁷ He tested his willpower by committing himself to various disciplinary vows.

By these practices, Gandhi sought to transcend individual gratification and selfishness and prepared a way for Indians to become independent in daily life by having very few desires. Moral disciplines (which were prescribed by the Buddha to break the fetter of *taṇhā*) for Gandhi became an approach to removing dependence on the foreign regime. Spiritual freedom would lead to political liberation. Gandhi claims: "Truthfulness, *brahmacharya*, non-violence, non-stealing, and non-hoarding, these five rules of life are obligatory on all aspirants.... Everyone who observes these vows will be able to find a way out of all perplexities."⁴⁸ He utilized these teachings as a liberating apparatus to purify inner passions and social evils: slavery, racism, oppression, and gender inequality. The result was therapeutic. He mobilized a mass movement that awakened Indians to the reality of their suffering caused by racial oppression and prejudice and inspired them to sacrifice in order to confront oppression and slavery. Gandhi's mass mobilization to confront unjust laws and his "mission of relieving the

grief-stricken and downtrodden” has been compared to the “the Buddha’s great march of renunciation.”⁴⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, records the psychological transformation of the Indian people:

The essence of his [Gandhi’s] teaching was fearlessness and truth and action allied to these.... So, suddenly as it were, the black pall of fear was lifted from the people’s shoulder, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree.... It was a psychological change, almost as if an expert in psychoanalytic method had probed deep into the patient’s past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid them of burden.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

The direct experience of suffering made the Buddha and Gandhi analyze the cause and find the cure for the suffering that extended beyond their personal pain and private concerns. Iyer writes: “The revelation of the pain as the law of existence can be regarded as the condition sine qua non for redemption. Suffering can have a positive, constructive function and a value.”⁵¹ But suffering could be constructive only when one is able to realize its reality and alter the negative experience into a therapeutic program for one’s own self and society. The Buddha’s teachings may appear to be world-denying, but they also present a formula to address the various forms of *dukkha*—physical, psychological, and social.

The Buddhist way of overcoming suffering can also be applied to overcoming psychological, physical, and social problems as illustrated by the example of Gandhi. Erik Erikson reflects on Gandhi’s confession of personal anxiety and his overcoming of suffering:

For while our clinical era might see in his confessions [referring to Gandhi’s confessions of guilt, shame, depression, and shyness in his autobiography] only an admission of having been possessed by irrational guilt, the Mahatma does not stop there. He *experimented*, so he means to emphasize..., with the devils of shame and doubt, guilt and inferiority: he challenged them and won.⁵²

Gandhi challenged the “devils” as the Buddha confronted Māra by using the inner strength acquired by moral disciplines. They both chose the life of a renunciate and sought to purge the phobia and pain created by social oppression. Gandhi echoes the Buddha⁵³ when he un-

derscores deep-rooted passions and attachment as the source of fear and suffering:

There is fear of disease in enjoyments, there is danger of destruction in having a family, there is danger from kings in having riches, there is danger of ignominy in trying to be respected, there is danger of creating enemies in showing one's physical power, there is danger of disfigurement in having beauty, there is danger of disputation in discussing scriptures, there is danger from the evil-minded in being endowed with high qualities, there is danger of death in having the body, thus is everything a cause of fear. Only complete renunciation is free from fear.⁵⁴

Gandhi, by adopting a religious strategy, broadened the scope of alleviating suffering. He integrated his efforts for acquiring personal freedom from suffering with the freedom from suffering caused by social systems. His methods were religious in nature, but they were functional in the socio-political context. By identifying the service of humanity as a spiritual endeavor, Gandhi aimed at relieving his followers from the fetters of suffering from both the present and future lives.

In today's society, with its shrinking geographical distances and broadening gap between traditional established norms and the fast and fluctuating modern life—media, instant news, job, relationships—the problems of “unease” and fear are extensive. At this time, listening to the Buddha's clear message of the reality of suffering; his call to root out suffering by overcoming emotions of greed, hatred, and delusion by the diligent practice of moral disciplines; and his recommendation to cultivate positive mental attitudes by self-analysis could bring relief to all people, from patients and physicians, to psychotherapists and political leaders.

Even though Gandhi's overt emphasis on action and the Buddha's on renunciation seem to make them ideologically different, a deep listening to their narratives and message brings convergence to these dichotomous strands: renunciation and ethical principles are instruments to end social and metaphysical suffering. Through his attentive listening to the Buddha's *truth of suffering* and following the moral teachings propagated by him in other religious texts, Gandhi found a therapeutic program: the neurosis of fear and pain is deeply rooted in egotistic and private attachments. The recognition of the source of suffering and gradually overcoming inherent negative emotions of greed and delusion through renunciatory practices leads the way to the inner

“ease” that seeks to ameliorate the factors causing social dis-ease (*dukkha*). The pure—passionless—mind is able to listen deeply to the concerns of others and act to alleviate their suffering. In the deep listening mind, a miraculous transformation dawns: understanding of the root of suffering leads to the concern for the well-being of others. A modern Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, emphasizes: “While listening you know that only with deep listening can you relieve the suffering of the other person. If you listen with just half an ear, you cannot do it.”⁵⁵

NOTES

1. In English, there is no direct equivalent to the word *dukkha*; it is generally translated as “suffering” or “illness.” “It signifies dis-ease in the sense of discomfort, frustration, or disharmony with environment.” In Christmas Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (Chicago: NTC Publishing Group, 1962), 70.
2. Padmasiri De Silva, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, Boulder, and New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 2.
3. “It may be said that, in India at any rate, Hinduism and Buddhism were but one, and that even today the fundamental principles of both are identical.” Gandhi elaborates during one of his lectures that the Buddha did not start a new religion, but those who came after him gave his teachings “the identity of a new religion.” In Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, CD-ROM, 98 vols. (Delhi: Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958–1994), 4:247.
4. A serious candidate is required to go through a series of “preparatory” states of “understanding.” “The first of these states is known as *śravaṇa*: study, listening to the teacher and thoroughly learning the revealed texts by paying careful attention to what they say.” Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 431.
5. V. S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), 932.
6. For example, “The Fire Sermon.” In Walpola Sri Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, rev. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 95.
7. Joseph Bailey, “Deep Listening: The Prerequisite to Presence,” http://www.thespeedtrap.com/Reflections/Heart_to_Heart/Listening.listening.html; quoted in Rev. Ann C. Fox, “Deep Listening,” <http://www.uufairhaven.org/2002/Ser2002Oct13.htm>.
8. There are several volumes that explore the interactions between psychotherapy and Buddhism, such as Mark Unno, ed., *Buddhism and Psychotherapy across Cultures* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006); and Manly P. Hall, *Buddhism and Psychotherapy* (Los Angeles: The Philosophical Society, 1967).
9. “Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth” (*Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*), in Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 93.
10. Lama Anagarika Govinda thus explicates three types of suffering. He quotes the *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna-sutta*, *Dīgha-nikāya* 22: “jāt ipi dukkha, jarā pi dukkha, maraṇam pi dukkhaṃ (I) (soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsa pi dukkhā), yam p’ichaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ (II) saṃkhittena pañv’cupādanakkhandā pi dukkhā (III).” In Lama Govinda Anagarika, *Psycho-*

logical Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy and Its Systematic Representation according to Abidhamma Tradition (London: Rider & Company, 1961), 49.

11. The *Dhammapada* (*Maggavaggo*: 5–6), trans. and ed. S. Radhakrishnan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 146. Subsequent references to the *Dhammapada* from the same edition.

12. “Reality anxiety is a painful emotional experience resulting from a perception of danger in the external world.” Calvin Hall, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* (New York: The New American Library, 1979), 63.

13. Some scholars discuss the Buddha’s classification of the fourfold regimen of noble truths in the context of therapeutic models of Āyurveda, medical science, and the *Yoga-bhāṣya*: “In an analysis of the four-fold division the *Yoga-śāstra*, the Āyurvedic medical science and the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths, A. Wezler discusses the term *ārogya*, ‘health’ (a ‘not,’ *rogya* ‘broken, from *√ruj*, ‘to break’). Wezler notes that *ārogya* connotes *restoration* to a condition free of disease, presupposing an original state of health.” In Gregory P. Fields, *Religious Therapeutics: Body and Health in Yoga, Āyurveda, and Tantra* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 133.

14. *Dhammapada* (*Arhantavaggo*, 2), 89.

15. Literally, “going or wandering through,” “undergoing transmigration.” Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, new ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 1119.

16. At times Gandhi was mocked by his fellow Hindus as following Buddhism instead of Hinduism, by adhering to the principles of non-violence and compassion like the Buddha. Gandhi replies to this accusation: “And sometimes I feel even proud of being accused of being a follower of the Buddha, and I have no hesitation in declaring in the presence of this audience that I owe a great deal to the inspiration that I have derived from the life of the Enlightened One.” Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 40:368–369.

17. Gandhi, however, deplored the comparison on the basis of his “ordinariness” and the Buddha’s divine qualities. Gandhi writes: “First and foremost, it is a mistake to consider me a reincarnation of Buddha or of the Prophet. I have never made any such claim. I am an ordinary man. Of course I do try to follow the principles of life as preached by our scriptures and our great men.” Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 95:55.

18. In Nicholas. F. Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence from Gautama to Gandhi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 58.

19. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or, The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 112.

20. Catherine Clement, *Gandhi: The Power of Pacifism*, trans. Randhir Singh (New York: Abrams, 1996), 38.

21. By utilizing the lens of psychoanalysis Erikson studies the possible underlying hidden meanings of his compulsive anti-sexual behavior. Erikson notes: "I was a psychoanalyst...men of my kind do not merely ask for facts that can be put on the dotted line but really want to discover hidden meanings within the facts and between the lines." E. H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: Norton & Co., 1969), 65.
22. R. Walker, *Sword of Gold: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Indian Independence Union, 1945), 15.
23. Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia: The Great Renunciation* (London: Trübner & Co., 1879). The book presents the life, character, and philosophy of the Buddha.
24. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 69.
25. M. G. Bhagat, *Ancient Indian Asceticism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1976), 160.
26. Quoted in Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence*, 59.
27. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 22:159.
28. *Ibid.*, 14:176.
29. G. P. Malalasekera, "Some Aspects of Reality as Taught by Theravāda Buddhism," in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, ed. Charles Moore (Honolulu: East-West Center Press and University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 83.
30. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 15:242.
31. De Silva, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, 4–5.
32. Hinduism (principles of *dharma* ethics) and Jainism (five *aṇuvrata*, small vows) recommend a similar set of five ethical principles for spiritual evolution.
33. *Ahiṃsā* is a basic principle of all of the Indian religious traditions. In the Hindu tradition it is considered to be the "highest virtue (*dharma*)."
34. M. K. Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. Krishna Kriplani (New York: Continuum, 1990), 81.
35. Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, rev. ed. (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), 127.
36. *Dhammapada* (*Daṇḍavaggo*: 1), 102.
37. Quoted in Jonathon Schell, *The Unconquerable World* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003), 125.
38. *Dhammapada* (*Dhammaṭṭhavaggo*: 1), 140.
39. Walter O. Kaelber, "Understanding Asceticism—Testing a Typology: Re-

sponse to the Three Preceding Papers," in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 325.

40. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 6:193.

41. Kirin Narayan, *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 79.

42. Louis Dumont discusses the dynamic role of the renouncer in social reform and creating values in *Religion/Politics and History in India: Collected Papers in Indian Sociology* (Paris and Hague: Mouton, 1970), 46.

43. R. N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 235.

44. They include Swami Dayananda (1824–1883) of the Arya Samaj movement, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) of the Vedanta Society, and Swami Sivananda (1887–1963).

45. Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform*, 204.

46. Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 51.

47. Gandhi says: "I was anxious to observe *brahmacharya* in thought, word, and deed, and equally anxious to devote the maximum of my time to the *Satyāgraha* struggle and fit myself for by cultivating purity. I was, therefore, led to make further changes and greater restraints upon myself in the matter of food...the new experiments were made from a religious point of view." Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, 26.

48. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 14:355.

49. Mahadev Desai reflecting on the sentiments of people during the Salt March led by Gandhi. In Dennis Dalton, *Gandhi's Power: Nonviolence in Action*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004), 109.

50. Quoted in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph, *The Traditional Roots of Gandhi's Charisma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1967] 1983), 6.

51. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 236.

52. E. H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, 107.

53. "From the liked arises grief; from the liked arises fear.... From affection arises grief; from affection arises fear." The *Dhammapada* (*Piyavaggo*: 4–9), 129.

54. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 13:279.

55. Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future to Be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Mindfulness Trainings*, rev. ed. (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2007), 48.

The Emancipation of Evil Beings: The Story of the Salvation of King Ajātaśatru

Naoki Nabeshima

Ryukoku University, Kyoto

*To be without shame and self-reproach is not to be human;
it is to be a beast.*

—Jīvaka

*Karmic evil is from the beginning without real form;
It is the result of delusional thought and invertedness.*

—Shinran

INTRODUCTION

Human history has witnessed the conflict between good and evil. Human beings have been fighting each other with swords and shields of justice. In a sense, these are battles of one good against another good. Hatred, antagonism, torture, murder, and war emerge from the self-centered darkness of the mind (*mumyō* 無明). How can we seek peace of mind in the midst of conflict between good and evil? Shinran uses the story of King Ajātaśatru to articulate the spiritual emancipation of evil persons. Shinran's Pure Land teachings have helped its followers understand the defilements of the world and the evilness within themselves by confronting their sorrows and leading them on the path to enlightenment.

Shinran's Reflection on the Emancipation of Evil Being

Shinran (1173–1262), the medieval Pure Land Buddhist cleric and the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, reasoned that spiritual release and realization is achieved through other-power (*tariki* 他力),¹ namely, Buddha's wisdom and compassion. Shinran particularly em-

phasizes the spiritual transformation of *bonbu* (凡夫, evil person) who is filled with *bonno* (煩惱, evil passions, Skt. *kleśa*), and who understands his/her limitations, recognizes the depth of his/her delusion, and entrusts his/her spiritual release to other-power, the Buddha's primal vow.² To explain the reality of spiritual transformation and release of the evil person, Shinran coined the expression *akunin shōki* (悪人正機). Describing the person who is the most favored for spiritual release, *akunin shōki* arose from the egalitarian posture that the mind that is free from ego-attachments and has transcended the dualism of good and evil.³ Encouraged by Amida Buddha's vow that embraces and never abandons the karmic-filled person (*bonbu*), the notion of *akunin shōki* crystallizes the rationale and process for spiritual release. The karmically-filled evil person is assured spiritual release when he/she squarely faces his/her karmic limitations, realizes his/her delusion, tries to live sincerely, and wishes happiness for himself/herself and others.⁴ However, Shinran never encourages people to commit evil deeds that would lead themselves and others to suffering.

Shinran outlines the rationale and process of spiritual transformation and release of the evil person through the working of Amida Buddha's primal vow by reference to the tragedy at Rājagrha. The original story is found in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Shinran quotes selective passages in the "Chapter on *Shinjin*" in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Shinran identifies Prince Ajātaśatru, who assassinated his father, King Bimbisāra, and imprisoned his mother, Queen Vaidehī, as personifying all the three types of evil persons. Their respective illnesses are so severe, incurable, and fatal that even the Buddha is at a loss. The three are those who:

1. slander the *buddhadharma*, the Mahāyāna teaching, and speak ill of the Buddhist teachings;
2. commit the five grave offenses: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an *arhat*, causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha, and disrupting the harmony of the sangha; and
3. have severed the root of goodness (or mind of goodness) and are dispossessed to the seeds for buddhahood, i.e., the *icchantikas* (*issendai* 一闍提).⁵

The transformation and cure of these three types of persons requires able physicians, proper therapies, and effective medication. Accordingly, by listening to the teaching of the Buddha and bodhisattvas and following their guidance, these types of persons can awaken their *bo-*

dhi-mind even in the midst of their suffering. In the retelling of the tragedy of Rājagṛha, I explain and comment on the essentials of Shīran's teachings.

The Buddha's Salvation of the Evil Being: The Case of Prince Ajātaśatru

The following events summarize the story of the salvation of Prince Ajātaśatru:

1. Ajātaśatru's killing his father
2. advice of six ministers
3. Ajātaśatru's meeting with Jīvaka: significance of repentance
4. voice from heaven
5. the Buddha's meeting with Ajātaśatru
6. the Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi*
7. significance of the moon-radiant love *samādhi*
8. teaching of the Buddha: encountering a true teacher and mentor
9. Ajātaśatru's anxiety
10. the Buddha's teaching to Ajātaśatru
11. conversion of Ajātaśatru
12. true repentance
13. aspiration and repentance of Ajātaśatru
14. significance of reverse condition
15. significance of deep listening and hearing

(1) Ajātaśatru's Killing His Father

Prince Ajātaśatru lived in the palace of Rājagṛha in a country called Magadha in northwestern India. His nature was very violent and his mind filled with greed, anger, and ignorance.⁶ The people usually called Prince Ajātaśatru "Prince Sudarśana," which means "good wisdom." One day, Devadatta enticed the prince, saying, "Your father King Bimbisāra once attempted to kill you."

Devadatta said, "Before you were born, all the soothsayers declared, 'This infant, once it has been born, will assuredly slay its father.' For this reason, the common people all call you 'Unborn Enemy.' Everyone close to you, in order to protect your feelings, calls you Sudarśana.

“Queen Vaidehī, having heard the words of the prediction, cast you from the top of a high tower when you were born. In that fall, your finger was broken. Because of this incident, the people call you ‘Broken Fingere.’ When I heard this, such sorrow and resentment sprang up in my heart that I could not face you and tell you of it.”

Devadatta related a variety of such matters, seeking to induce the prince to kill his father, and said, “If you kill your father, I too will kill the sramana Gautama.””

After hearing this, the prince spawned hatred for his father. He conspired against his father and was eventually successful in imprisoning him. Angry that his mother would try to save her husband, Ajātaśatru confined her to her quarters. He then enthroned himself as king of Magadha. Seven days after he stopped providing his imprisoned father clothing, bedding, food, drink, and medicine, the king passed away. Informed that his father had died, Ajātaśatru realized the graveness of his offence and began to regret and repent for what he had done. Shortly thereafter he became very ill; his body was covered with foul-smelling boils. Stricken by a sense of guilt and his body and mind in pain, Ajātaśatru feared falling into hell.

(2) Advice of Six Ministers

Each of his six ministers visited King Ajātaśatru and consoled him, telling him he was blameless. Each also advised him to cast off his sorrow and affliction, because the more he felt sorrowful, the more pain he would suffer.⁸ Respectively, the advice of the ministers reflected the six competing philosophies that rejected the truth of *pratīyasamutpāda* (*engi* 緣起), the principle of causation and interdependence.

(3) Ajātaśatru’s Meeting with Jīvaka: Significance of Repentance

Subsequently, Ajātaśatru met with Jīvaka, an eminent physician, and explained the background of his illness. Although the six ministers advised King Ajātaśatru that he was blameless, Jīvaka’s counsel differed from the advice Ajātaśatru received from his six ministers. Jīvaka praised the King for his confessing his misdeeds and crime by saying, “Oh excellent, excellent! Though the king committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled shame and self-reproach. To be without shame and self-reproach is not to be human; it is to be a beast.”⁹ By affirming Ajātaśatru’s admission of his

mistakes, Jīvaka in essence introduced the king to the Buddha's teaching. Repenting self-centered crime is to be human. "Though the King has committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled with shame and self-reproach." The significance of "shame and self-reproach" is critical in understanding Shinran's notion of *akunin shōki*. The quickening of "shame" leads to a cessation of committing further evil deeds and to humility. The awakening of "self-reproach" results in not leading others to commit evil, expressing one's abasement outwardly, and the feeling of humility before heaven.

Those who commit crimes are not able to reform if they fail to acknowledge the reality of their crimes or if they rationalize their innocence. Self-delusion only increases suffering and self-torment. The path toward spiritual transformation begins by facing the reality of their crimes, reflecting on their past conduct, and sincerely confessing their faults.

(4) Voice from Heaven

When Ajātaśatru heard his father, King Bimbisāra, speaking from heaven, he fainted and his physical condition worsened considerably.

"Great King, the person who commits one grave offense suffers fully the corresponding retribution for it. If he commits two grave offenses, the retribution is double. If he commits five, the retribution is fivefold. Great King, we know with certainty now that you cannot escape your evil acts. Pray, Great King, go quickly to the Buddha! Apart from seeing the Buddha, the World-honored one, there is no help. It is out of deep pity that I urge you to do so."

As the Great King heard these words, terror gripped his heart and a shudder ran through his body. He trembled in his five parts like a plantain tree. Gazing upward, he replied, "Who is it? There is no form, only the voice."

[Then it replied,] "Great King! It is your father, Bimbisāra. Let Jīvaka's advice be heeded. Do not follow the words of the six ministers; their views are wrong."

Upon hearing this, the King fainted and collapsed to the ground. The sores on his body spread with vehemence, and the stench and filth grew worse. Cooling salves were applied to treat the sores, but they still burned and the poisonous fever only worsened, with no sign of alleviation.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that Ajātaśatru's sores suddenly increased twofold. The first time was when Ajātaśatru's mother, Vaidehī, was caring for

Ajātaśatru. Ajātaśatru realized the significance of having caused his father's death in jail. Because he killed his father, a fever of remorse arose in his heart. Because of this fever of remorse in his heart, sores began to cover his entire body. As soon as Ajātaśatru's mother, Queen Vaidehī, was liberated from prison, she applied a variety of medicines.¹¹ She took care of Ajātaśatru without judgment. Then, his sores only spread, showed more clearly, and increased in stench. The second time was when Ajātaśatru heard his father's voice from heaven; Ajātaśatru's sores and stench again increased dramatically.¹²

Why did Ajātaśatru's sores suddenly increase twofold? Ajātaśatru's fever, sores, and stench represent his remorse and his repentance of his evil deeds toward his father and mother. Ajātaśatru clung to his belief that his father and mother hated him. However, after badly mistreating his parents, he came to appreciate their kindness and compassion. His sores and stench grew worse in proportion to his deeply realizing his offences.

(5) The Buddha's Meeting with Ajātaśatru

Encouraged by the physician Jīvaka, Ajātaśatru met with the Buddha, who, seeing his suffering, said, "Good son! I say, For the sake of Ajātaśatru, I will not enter Nirvana.... Why? Because for the sake of means for all foolish beings, and Ajātaśatru includes universally all those who commit the five grave offenses.... Ajātaśatru refers to all those who have yet to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment."¹³ The utterance "For the sake of Ajātaśatru, I will not enter Nirvana" is especially significant for Shinran, who believes that Buddha's compassion pours out to the people who are afflicted with very deep anguish. Concerned for those persons who have committed the most hideous deeds, the Buddha says, "I will be with you until you are saved." Ajātaśatru came to truly realize his own evilness through his encounter with the compassionate mind of the Buddha. Most human beings cannot avoid committing evil deeds, but the Buddha guides all suffering beings toward enlightenment. It is noteworthy that the Buddha refers to Ajātaśatru as "good son"; it is another indication of the Buddha's great concern for suffering beings.

(6) The Buddha's *Samādhi* of Moon-Radiant Love

Completing his interview with Ajātaśatru the Buddha entered the moon-radiant love *samādhi* and radiated a brilliant light that instantly healed the stricken Ajātaśatru. Ajātaśatru asked Jīvaka,

“Does the Tathagata, the World-honored one, think to cast his eye on me?”

Jīvaka replied, “Suppose there are parents with seven children, when there is sickness among the seven children, although the father and mother are concerned equally with all of them, nevertheless their hearts lean wholly toward the sick child. Great King, it is like this with the Tathagata. It is not that there is no equality among all sentient beings, but his heart leans wholly toward the person who has committed evil.”¹⁴

As shown in the words of the Buddha, he exists wholly to save ordinary beings in the depths of karmic evil.

(7) Meaning of the *Samādhi* of Moon-Radiant Love

The *samādhi* of moon-radiant love brings joy to all:

Jīvaka answered, “The light of the moon brings joy to the hearts of all travelers on the road. Such is the *samādhi* of moon-radiant love, which brings joy to the hearts of those in practice on the path of nirvana. This is why it is called ‘the *samādhi* of moon-radiant love’.... It is the king of all good, it is sweet nectar. It is what all sentient beings love and aspire for.”¹⁵

The radiance of the Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi* is not a supernatural cure. The Buddha's *samādhi* of moon radiant love conveys two meanings. First, just as the light of the moon shines gently without overwhelming the darkness, the Buddha's non-judgmental and unconditional compassion can embrace the evil person. For an evil-filled suffering person, it is very reassuring to have someone be with them silently. Buddha's *samādhi* of moon-radiant love demonstrates the power of compassionate presence. Those who experience unspeakable suffering need a good listener who can enable self-reflection. Second, the Buddha's *samādhi* of moon-radiant love signifies the necessity of quiet reflection free from secular distractions. A suffering person seeks without the need for explanation, because one cannot express one's deep sorrow in words. Zen meditation and reciting the *nenbutsu* are methods through which one can realize one's true self. In other

words, embraced by Amida Buddha's infinite light of compassion, one comes to know one's foolishness.

(8) Teaching of the Buddha:

Encountering with a True Teacher and Mentor

After emerging from the of moon-radiant love *samādhi*, the Buddha said to all those in the great assembly, "Among the immediate causes of all sentient beings' attainment of supreme, perfect enlightenment, the foremost is a true teacher. Why? If King Ajātaśatru did not follow the advice of Jīvaka, he would decidedly die on the seventh day of next month and plunge into Avīci hell. Hence, with the day [of the death] approaching, there is nothing more important than a true teacher."¹⁶ It is difficult to accept responsibility for one's evil deeds; one is prone to rationalize one's actions. As the narrative reveals, it becomes possible for one to accept one's evilness when one encounters a being who can wholly accept a person who is aware of one's own evil. The narrative of Ajātaśatru describes an encounter between an evil person and a true teacher and mentor that brought spiritual relief. Ajātaśatru's intimate encounter with Jīvaka and the Buddha gave him the opportunity for self-reflection. The encounter that helped Ajātaśatru develop a mutual relationship is also true for others.

(9) Ajātaśatru's Anxiety

Ajātaśatru anxiously begged Jīvaka with the following request: "Come with me, O Jīvaka! I want to ride on the same elephant with you. Even though I should with certainty plunge into Avīci hell, my wish is that you grasp me and keep me from falling. For I have heard in the past that the person who has attained the way does not fall into hell..."¹⁷ Though the Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi* healed Ajātaśatru's mental and physical afflictions, Ajātaśatru was still burdened with the grave offences he committed; he was still afraid of falling into hell. Depressed by terrible guilt, he was fearful of the retribution for the offences that he committed.

(10) The Buddha's Teaching to Ajātaśatru

Causes and conditions of an evil deed. The Buddha's instruction to Ajātaśatru is long and ambiguous. This section of the sutra is also very difficult to interpret, and its doctrinal significance has yet to be thor-

oughly unpacked. But one thing is clear. Śākyamuni Buddha reveals a path for resolving the problem of evil from the perspective of enlightenment. The Buddha explains to Ajātaśatru the causes and conditions of his evil deeds that can be understood, not only from Ajātaśatru's perspective, but also from many differing viewpoints. The following words of the Buddha are particularly noteworthy.

“King, if you have committed evil, all Buddhas, world-honored ones, must have done so also. Why? Because your father, the former king Bimbisāra, always planted roots of good by paying homage to the Buddhas. For this reason, he was able to occupy the throne in this life. If the Buddhas had not accepted that homage, he would not have been able to become king. If he had not become king, you would not have been able to kill him in order to seize the kingdom. If you have committed evil in killing your father, we Buddhas too must have also. If the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, have not committed evil, how can you alone have done so?”¹⁸

The Buddha's statement, “if you have committed evil, all Buddhas, world-honored ones, must have done so also,” are words of compassion toward Ajātaśatru. Here, the Buddha announces that his offense is not his alone.

The Buddha's compassionate mind identifies with the mind of a person who has committed a crime as if the Buddha had committed it himself. Compassion is the Buddha's method to remove suffering and give peace to others. Such compassion is expressed in the words “your suffering is my suffering.” This attitude of non-duality of self and others transcends the self and sympathizes with others. No matter how grave a person's offense may be, when the person feels a loving mind that tries to get beyond the transgression, a pure good mind can arise even from the mind that willed the grave offense. It is important that someone be present with the person who commits an offense and share their suffering until the end. The Buddha is not a co-conspirator with the murderer. However, a murder is not resolved by simply putting all the blame on a single person. The Buddha knows the significance of understanding the sadness of a person who commits a murder as one's own sadness.

The Buddha understands that Ajātaśatru fully realizes the seriousness of his crime of murder and that he is gripped by the fear of falling into hell alone. Therefore, the Buddha teaches that his crime occurred when various causes and conditions came together. He sees that, because of the crime, Ajātaśatru feels extremely shameful and cannot see

his future at all. The Buddha understands that an evil person cannot bear to live with the burden of the crime they have committed by simply reproaching them and tormenting them by foretelling their retributions. The Buddha instead thinks together with Ajātaśatru about how he can go on with his life.

Giving widened perspectives of dependent co-arising. The important issue is that the Buddha does not see evil as permanently fixed. All events are after all subject to change and are empty of permanent reality. The Buddha's perception that the karmic retribution created by a crime is not permanently fixed provides Ajātaśatru with a totally new perspective on his future.

First, Ajātaśatru is given a broader perspective on reality with the concepts of emptiness and dependent co-origination. Ajātaśatru's murder of his father is a reality and a very grave offense of taking away a human life. However, from the Buddhist perspective based on the concepts of emptiness and dependent co-origination, an evil deed occurs as a result of various causes and conditions. Ajātaśatru is not the only person who is to be blamed for the crime. The Buddha provides Ajātaśatru a new and broader perspective on evil deeds. Shinran interpreted the essence of evil as "unformed evil."

Karmic evil is from the beginning without real form;
It is the result of delusional thought and invertedness.
Mind-nature is from the beginning pure,
But as for this world, there is no person of truth.¹⁹

Shinran states that, by its nature, evil does not have a firm substantial form. It arises when one makes a judgment through eccentric and delusional views and adheres to a completely inverted interpretation of truth. Thus, he says that there is no "person of truth," even though one is pure by nature. Shinran's interpretation of evil, that it has no form in itself, but arises from delusion and distortion, has much in common with the contents of the Buddha's sermon described in the *Nirvana Sutra*.

Second, the Buddha teaches that one should not simply be constricted by a crime one committed, but should also be given hope for the future. Ajātaśatru cannot erase the grave offense of murdering his father. However, at the same time, he should not perceive karmic retributions of the crime as fixed. His future is not determined only by the crime committed in the past. Of course, the more deeply one laments, the more one becomes bound to the terror of the crime committed

and must live with the heavy burden of the crime. It is important not to forget the crime. However, realizing the graveness of the crime, it is even more important to seek to live a true life beyond remorse for the crime.

Reflecting on ourselves, we need to remember that our own self-righteousness and authoritarianism are often created out of our own attitude that we are good. On the other hand, if we dwell too much on the evil aspects of our nature, we tend to deprecate ourselves and shut ourselves into a world of darkness. If we put too much emphasis on karmic retribution, we may fall into the fallacy of determinism. Therefore, the Buddha teaches that we must take responsibility for the crimes we commit, but, without being bound by the past, we need to explore the future to be liberated from our evil minds.

(11) Conversion of Ajātaśatru

The Buddha's compassionate words enabled *shinjin* (信心) to arise within Ajātaśatru, who responded with deep gratitude. Ajātaśatru said,

“O World-honored one, observing the world, I see that from the seed of the eranda grows the eranda tree. I do not see a candana tree growing from an eranda seed. But now for the first time I see a candana tree growing from the seed of an eranda. The eranda seed is myself: the candana tree is *shinjin* that has no root in my heart.”²⁰

“Eranda” signifies self-awareness of Ajātaśatru's crime. “Candana” signifies *shinjin* filled with Buddha's infinite compassion. In this process, Ajātaśatru in his shame and self-reproach comes to realize the graveness of his crime, and his evil mind is transformed into pure faith (*shinjin*) through the compassion of the Buddha.

True repentance. Quickening awareness of shame and self-reproach equals to a process of understanding oneself and to live one's life seriously. One has to be aware of evil as evil. In other words, having awareness of shame and self-reproach is neither a rite of passage for salvation nor an expiation of evil. It remains throughout one's life and will be gradually deepened. It is clear in the following confession that *shinjin* with no root arose in Ajātaśatru's heart. He said, “Having met with evil friends, I committed evils whose recompense spanned past, present and future. Now, before the Buddha, I repent; may I henceforth never perform evil again.”²¹ *Shinjin* with no root arisen in Ajātaśatru's heart led him to humbly repent before the Buddha. Consequently,

Ajātaśatru's awareness of shame and self-reproach began immediately after the death of his father and he is entirely filled with Buddha's primal vow. Even after *shinjin* with no root arose in Ajātaśatru's heart, the awareness consistently continued and gradually deepened. Regarding shame and self-reproach Shinran explained that,

Although I am without shame and self-reproach
And lack a mind of truth and sincerity,
Because the Name is directed by Amida,
Its virtues fill the ten quarters.²²

Shinran confessed that what he should have shame and self-reproach for was nothing but himself, as he could not have even the awareness of shame and self-reproach.²³ However, at the same time, he described that even though he was not capable of having the awareness, he was entirely filled with the virtue of Amida's primal vow. True shame and self-reproach are not those that one can be aware of by will or efforts. They can be eventually conceived by one, once the deceitful self is enlightened by Amida's primal vow to save all sentient beings by the other-power.²⁴

ASPIRATION AND REPENTANCE OF AJĀTAŚATRU

Now, let us consider the most important statement by Ajātaśatru, which articulates his psychological change when *shinjin* with no root arose in his heart. His *shinjin* was expressed as an aspiration: "World-honored one, if I can clearly destroy sentient beings' mind of evil, even if I were to dwell in Avīci hell constantly for innumerable kalpas, undergoing pain and suffering for the sake of sentient beings, it would not be painful."²⁵ Although Ajātaśatru deeply repented his evil acts and greatly feared going to hell, he declared his aspiration to assist evil sentient beings' who were suffering, even if he would eventually go to hell. His holding on to evil and fear of hell were transformed into love towards others, for which he did not hesitate to go to hell. His aspiration arose by going through deep sorrow and remained with a deep repentance, which was expressed in his poem dedicated to the Buddha.

Having met with evil friends,
I committed evils whose recompense spanned past, present and
future.
Now, before the Buddha, I repent;
May I henceforth never perform evil again.

May all sentient beings alike awaken the mind aspiring for
 enlightenment,
 And with a whole heart think constantly on the Buddha
 throughout the ten quarters.
 And may all sentient beings
 break free forever from blind passions,
 and in seeing Buddha-nature clearly,
 be the equal of Mañjuśrī.²⁶

Ajātaśatru's straightforward repentance and aspiration arose from the bottom of his heart. He swore not to commit any more evil deeds and aspired to free all sentient beings from the sufferings of their evil passions. Ajātaśatru, who committed a grave offense, encounters the Buddha's embracing compassion. At that moment, a deep gratitude arose and he discovers a new direction for his life, a life of faith (*shinjin*). Ajātaśatru's old self dies and a new self is born. He breaks out of his solitary shell of ego-attachment and is born as a son of the Tathāgata. This is *shinjin*.

In the *Nirvana Sutra*, the Buddha's concern for Ajātaśatru does not simply arise from a sense of duty or responsibility, but from joy and hope. Śākyamuni Buddha believes that there is a future even for a person who commits the gravest offenses. If the entirety of our lives were predetermined, we would have no control over our actions, both good and evil. Happiness and unhappiness would be determined, a matter of fate. If the future is determined by the past, there would be no point to hope, no need to make efforts to repent transgressions or to be kind for the sake of others. Philosophies that negate *pratīyasamutpāda* (dependent co-origination), such as determinism, do not provide any motivation for hope in the future.

The Buddha's teaching of *pratīyasamutpāda* informs Ajātaśatru that everything and all events arise due to various causes and conditions, are dependent on each other, and are continuously changing. To live in accordance with the teaching of *pratīyasamutpāda* is to respect the freedom of each human being. To understand that everything is interconnected means that "I am not alone; I live in the love and vows of others." When we experience such compassion, we can transform our suffering into energy and hope for the future. The possibility of spiritual transformation negates the determinism of karmic deeds. No matter how grave one's karmic evil may be, when one realizes the depths of his or her misery, one can transform this misery into a truly nurturing and pure compassion. Faith and hope can provide people

with the power to live. On the relationship between evil and enlightenment Shinran writes,

Through the benefit of the unhindered light,
We realize shinjin of vast, majestic virtues,
And the ice of our blind passions necessarily melts,
Immediately becoming water of enlightenment.

Obstructions of karmic evil turn into virtues;
It is like the relation of ice and water:
The more the ice, the more the water;
The more the obstructions, the more the virtues.²⁷

This passage explains Shinran's understanding of the relationship between good and evil, and the warmth of Amida's vow. Although the appearance of ice and water are different, their nature is identical. "Evil passions are themselves enlightenment." Evil passions are attachments that harden the human mind. However, like ice that can melt into water, wrong thoughts can be transformed into the water of enlightenment through the warmth of Amida's light and vows. Amida Buddha's primal vow becomes one with one's lost self and converts evil into the goodness of enlightenment. By recognizing each other's evil we can together transcend the evil and build a peaceful future.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ADVERSE CONDITIONS

Adverse conditions can be catalyst for enlightenment and appreciation of Amida Buddha's benevolence. Ajātaśatru, Bimbisāra, Vaidehī, and Jīvaka, the principal personalities involved in the tragedy at Rājagṛha, are "the incarnations of benevolence"; they are the incarnations of bodhisattvas who appeared respectively as a prince, king, queen, and doctor.²⁸ For Shinran, the tragedy at Rājagṛha is a narrative to make one aware of infinite benevolence and tolerance of Amida Buddha. Just as flowers blooming at the edge of a garbage dump seem especially beautiful, suffering and sorrow offer an opportunity to find true tenderness and benevolence.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DEEP LISTENING AND HEARING

"Deep listening and hearing" has something in common with the *samādhi* of moon-radiant love practiced by the Buddha and the feeling of compassion arising from an awareness of dependent origination. "Listening," interpreted by Shinran as "guided to listen," means that

one with evil passions is wholly accepted, embraced, and guided by Amida to listen to the voice of truth. On the other hand, “hearing” is “awakening” to Amida’s primal vow as the highest expression of compassion in relation to the deep crisis of one’s existential plight.²⁹ “Hearing” is the experience of *shinjin*. In other words, “hearing” refers to the internal experience of feeling that Amida has reached out to one while one is in calm contemplation, when one is most aware of a sense of longing for help, in the midst of agony. It is through this “deep listening and hearing” that in agony one comes to recognize one’s bare self and realize dependent origination with all beings, in the light of the Buddha’s teachings. Ultimately, one’s lost self is converted into a more flexible personality, set free from various attachments.

In psychotherapy as well, “deep listening and hearing” is the basic attitude for the therapist (one who listens) to take toward the client (one who is heard). The therapist, sitting by the client, hears without a word the client’s talk of his/her sufferings in order to offer an unbiased analysis/finding. Through a continuous human relationship, mutual understanding is established between the therapist’s self and the self of the client. “Hearing” has the significant potential of bringing an unexpected, creative change to the self of the client.

“Deep listening and hearing” is a manifestation of affection done by someone who stays close but does not judge. It aims to ease the situation in which one is shackled by some kind of concept of one’s own, and to encourage one to lead a more flexible life in the midst of sufferings of day-to-day life.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to reflect on the true intention of Shinran’s understanding of the meaning of the emancipation of King Ajātaśatru. How did Ajātaśatru come to realize his own evil? What kind of ethical attitudes did Ajātaśatru cultivate through becoming aware of his evilness? The process of the salvation of King Ajātaśatru has three spiritual bonds filled with compassion that made Ajātaśatru come to realize how foolish he had been.

First, after the death of his father, Ajātaśatru became aware that his father and mother loved him deeply. As a result, Ajātaśatru keenly felt how terrible his behavior had been. Second, Jīvaka counseled Ajātaśatru, instructing him that living while feeling one’s evilness is living as a human being. Thanks to this, Ajātaśatru was able to face

honestly the offenses he had committed. Third, the Buddha trusted Ajātaśatru with complete confidence for his future, which in turn gave Ajātaśatru the motivation to transform himself into a being who could respond to the suffering of others and treat all living beings compassionately. The Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi* made Ajātaśatru realize that he was in the darkness of ignorance. Thus Shinran reasoned that by realizing that human beings live in *shinjin*, as vowed by the Buddha, our world expands beyond our ego-centric self. Encountering the Buddha's compassion or the Buddha's other-power frees us from the bondage of ego-attachments and enables us to accept our own real self, to continue living into our own future.

Ajātaśatru, knowing that he was embraced by the Buddha's vow just as he was, possessed of the evil deeds he had already committed, realized a great peace of mind. Encouraged by the Buddha's vow that would never abandon him, he came face to face with his own evil offenses and realized his ignorance. Because he realized his own ignorance, he became all the more sincere to make efforts to live his life honestly, wishing for the happiness of himself and others. *Shinjin* is one's love for all beings, which arises in the awakening of one's own ignorance. Ajātaśatru, who received the love and kindness of his father and mother, Jīvaka, and the Buddha, in turn extended his love and kindness to all beings. Although it took a long time, the Buddha's compassionate vow gradually penetrated Ajātaśatru's evil mind. Finally, his defiled mind was transformed into the mind of sincere repentance with aspiration for the happiness of all beings.

Shinran's teaching of the emancipation of evil beings (*akunin shōki*) developed out of the non-discriminating egalitarian thought fundamental to Buddhist teaching. *Akunin shōki* is the crystallization of profound self-reflection on human evil and loving compassion. Illuminated by the light of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion, we become aware of our real selves and realize that even within our own good mind, an evil mind is hiding. We realize the falseness hidden inside of good appearances. When we human beings transcend our attachment to the mind of calculation on good and evil, we become aware that all human beings are interconnected with each other.

Spiritual maturity in Buddhism can be measured by the capacity to acknowledge one's dependency on others. By accepting the loving kindness of others, a feeling of gratitude arises in our hearts. And that

feeling of gratitude is then transformed into our compassionate mind directed to all living beings.

All beings are interdependent. Violence arises from a sense of vanity. When one is conscious of being dependent upon others and Amida Buddha, one can reflect on oneself and go forward. Salvation is not a miracle that suddenly happens. Salvation from deep repentance of evil takes a long while. Enlightened by the benevolence of Amida, who stays with one in silence, and awakened by Amida's primal vow, one can be aware of one's evil and will be able to take the path to remaking one's life.

NOTES

1. In Shinran's words, "Where the mind of self-power is made to disappear... the realization of true entrusting that is Other Power (*tariki no shinjin*) comes out." Shinran further states, "Other Power means to be free from any form of calculation or attachment." The realization of other-power is awakening to the reality of interrelationship to all beings and identifying the self with others. Shinran, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, 2 vols. (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), 2:198.
2. *Tannishō*, chap. 3, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:663. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:95. "Hymns of the Dharma-Ages," in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:421.
3. The Buddha explains the approach to transcending good and evil as follows: "For those who have awakened and transcended good and evil, there is nothing to fear" (*Dhammapada* 39) and "A holy man is a man who has calmed himself, is a man who has abandoned merit and demerit. Knowing this world and the other, he is dustless and has overcome birth and death" (*Sutta-nipāta*, trans. Hammalava Saddhatissa [London: Curzon Press, 1985], 60). Enlightenment, which transcends both good and evil, is becoming liberated from worldly judgments and self-centered calculations.
4. *Mattōshō* 20, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:553–554.
5. "The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization," in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:125.
6. *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:125.
7. *Ibid.*, 1:142.
8. *Ibid.*, 1:126–130.
9. *Ibid.*, 1:131.
10. *Ibid.*, 1:132.
11. "Then the queen-mother Vaidehī applied a variety of medicines, but the sore only spread and showed no sign of alleviation. The King said to his mother, 'These sores have been produced by the heart.'" *Ibid.*, 1:126.
12. *Ibid.*, 1:132.
13. *Ibid.*, 1:132.
14. *Ibid.*, 1:133.
15. *Ibid.*, 1:134.
16. *Ibid.*, 1:134.
17. *Ibid.*, 1:134.

18. Ibid., 1:135.
19. “Hymns of the Dharma-Ages,” no. 107, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:423.
20. “The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization,” in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:137–138.
21. Ibid., 1:139–140.
22. “Hymns of the Dharma-Ages,” no. 97, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 2:421.
23. Sokusui Murakami writes, “Shinran’s words about evil and foolish beings are based on his real, deep repentance. When Shinran found himself aspiring for salvation by the benevolence of Amida, he at the same time found with regret that he was so far from it. The saint could not claim himself to be a good person, because, in his belief, he was rather nothing but a ‘being with deep evil and numerous defilements.’ This finding was indeed a matter for real shame and self-reproach. To be precise, however, Shinran found himself as a being who could not have even a sense of shame and self-reproach. He, therefore, called himself ‘A shameless being without a sense of self-reproach.’” Sokusui Murakami, *Shinran kyōgi no gokai to rikai* (Misinterpretation and Understanding of Shinran’s Doctrine) (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1984), 58.
24. Chang Wai 張偉 writes, “Ajātaśatru’s tears of shame, self-reproach, joy, and sorrow” is mundane in comparison to the true shame and self-reproach in Buddhism.

The shame and self-reproach from the perspective of Buddhism differ from those in mundane meaning. Shame and self-reproach in the mundane meaning are intentional work exposed to other’s eyes. One cannot be free from mingling of the elements of deceit, deceptions, or utilitarian schemes [in] how one tries to work with sincerity. Although shame and self-reproach in the mundane meaning could occasionally become the catalyst for [a] shift to a higher level of shame and self-reproach, if one stays with it one would not be able to reach the level of salvation by Buddhism. Shame and self-reproach of the level of Ajātaśatru could not be realized by intention. Now I understand afresh Shinran’s feeling expressed in his words “Unrepentant and unashamed.” Conceivably, the words “Unrepentant and unashamed” have the implication that shame and self-reproach would not be realized in the true sense of the word as long as one has such an awareness as “I will do, won’t do, can do, or can’t do” and as long as one does not abandon one’s own willful attempt. Ajātaśatru’s feeling of shame and self-reproach was triggered by his awareness of evil, and it is the power of Tathāgata that turns the awareness into an opportunity for salvation. The awareness of real shame and self-

reproach so realized is not the product of human will, but it would be brought about by the benevolence arisen of Amida's primal vow.

Chang Wai 張偉, "Ajase no zangi to hiki no namida (Ajātaśatru's Tears of Shame, Self-Reproach, Joy, and Sorrow)," *Jisho Dojin* 19 (November–December 2003): 12.

25. *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:138.

26. *Ibid.*, 1:139–140.

27. "Hymns of the Pure Land Masters," nos. 39–40, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:371.

28. Shinran regarded the persons in the lore surrounding Ajātaśatru as bodhisattvas who lead foolish beings to spiritual ease. "When conditions were mature for the teaching of birth in the Pure Land, Devadatta provoked Ajātaśatru to commit grave crimes, and out of pity for beings of this defiled world, Śākyamuni led Vaidehī to select the land of peace. As we turn this over in our minds and quietly reflect, we realize that Devadatta and Ajātaśatru bestowed their generous care on us, and that Amida and Śākyamuni thus manifested their profound intention to save all beings." *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:302.

29. *Ibid.*, 2:189.

Ajātaśatru: Family System and Karma

Marie Yoshida

University of Oregon

THIS ESSAY PROVIDES an interpretation of King Ajātaśatru, a figure well known in Japanese Buddhist culture from the perspective of Bowen Family Systems Therapy. This therapeutic approach is based on concepts such as individuality and togetherness, anxiety, and the multigenerational transmission process.

FAMILY THERAPY

History of Family Therapy

Family therapy first appeared when psychiatrists who studied and treated schizophrenic clients were confronted with the need to take family dynamics into account. At that time, many psychiatrists did not regard the family as an essential factor in the etiology and treatment of schizophrenia or of other mental illnesses. Family became the object of attention after Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) started to pay careful attention to the relationship between clients and their families. From the 1940s to 1950s, research on the correlation between family relationships and schizophrenia were carried out. Particularly important was the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson. Bateson found a peculiar communication pattern in families with schizophrenics. Don Jackson (1920–1968), a psychiatrist, and Jay Haley (1923–2007), one of the initial family theory founders, participated in this research. In 1959, Jackson and Haley started to utilize family therapy instead of psychoanalytic therapy and established the Mental Research Institute (MRI), which has been one of the leading institutes in the family therapy field. Several well-known family therapies, including Bowen Family Systems Therapy, emerged from this early work.

Bowen Family Systems Theory

Murray Bowen (1913–1990), who was a psychiatrist and the founder of Bowen Family Systems Therapy, started his study of schizophrenia in the late 1940s when he perceived a common pattern of relationship between patients and their mothers. Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen state that Bowen's theory is based on natural systems. This makes Bowen Family Systems Therapy unique because the other family theories are based on the concepts of cybernetics, general systems theory, and communication theory, theoretical orientations that focus more on the immediate present and the prospective future. Although other family theories have a here-and-now stance toward therapy, Bowen's theory expands into past relationships including the extended family because Bowen claims that the family contains two distinct systems: "the family *relationship* system and the family *emotional* system."¹

Bowen regards the family as "a multigenerational network of relationships" and focuses his attention especially on the mother-child relationship. Furthermore, he assumes that humans are more dependent and emotionally oriented than many people have imagined. Bowen's assumptions are that "human relationships are driven by two counterbalancing life sources, *individuality* and *togetherness*,"² which combine in the family's emotional system. Four key concepts arising from this tension between individuality and togetherness are differentiation of self, emotional triangles, nuclear family emotional process, and multigenerational transmission process.³ Bowen claims that it is essential to understand the relationship in the family as a triad, rather than as a dyad. In this view human beings and their families can be observed in terms of emotional triangles. As Kerr and Bowen state, "In actuality, it is never possible to explain the emotional process in one relationship adequately if its links to other relationships are ignored. One relationship becomes intertwined with others through a process of *triangling*.... The triangle is the basic molecule of an emotional system."⁴ Bowen makes *anxiety* a core concept of triangles in the emotional system and argues that relationships, drug use, personality traits, and beliefs form important anxiety-based factors in relationships. He claims that not only does one person's anxiety infect another person in the family, but anxiety can also be transmitted to later generations. Bowen called this a *multigenerational transmission process*.

Major Concepts of Family Therapy

Some family therapies pay attention to family structure; some focus on solving problems; and some emphasize communication patterns in a system. Family therapies, however, generally share the same basis, benefiting from concepts of systems theory, cybernetics, and communication theory. The concepts of all these theories are intertwined and constitute the core of family theory. These include wholeness, homeostasis, feedback loop, and process. These concepts have influenced Bowen Family Systems Theory as well.

“The Whole Is More than the Sum of the Parts”

In family therapy, “the wholeness” of the system is emphasized over “the parts.” The parts are each family member, while families constitute a systemic whole. As Nichols and Schwartz state: “[T]he essential properties of an organism, or living system, are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the interactions and relationships among the parts.... The whole is always greater than the sum of its parts.”⁵ Therapists focus on relationships between a client and his/her parents, between parents, and between the parents and their parents. This view makes it possible to understand presenting problems more accurately through the relationships and power balance between the parts of the family system. Thus, the therapist focuses not only on the individual as having the problem, but rather pays careful attention to the background of the client’s family history, including extended family, so as to understand a multidimensional pattern.

Homeostasis

Homeostasis, a concept of the utmost importance in family therapy, means that there is a tendency on the part of the family system to seek a stable equilibrium among the parts. Jackson introduced this idea to family therapy as a model for family interaction.⁶ He describes homeostasis as a family’s resistance to change in order to maintain the steady state; when a family system is disturbed, homeostasis operates to bring the disturbed system back into balance.⁷ Nichols and Schwartz also suggest that homeostasis is “the self-regulation that keeps systems in a state of dynamic balance.”⁸ Homeostasis is one of the key

concepts for many family therapy models because family homeostasis enforces unspoken agreement or “family rules.”

As Kerr and Bowen state: “A two-person system may be stable as long as it is calm, but since the level of calm is very difficult to maintain, a two-person system is more accurately characterized as [generally] unstable. When anxiety increases, a third person becomes involved in the tension of the twosome, creating a triangle. This involvement of a third person decreases anxiety in the twosome by spreading it through three relationships.”⁹ Two people who are under stress and anxiety need a third person so that they can obtain a stable constellation in a system. Bowen assumes that a stable state in a relationship is indispensable for people, even though it may be maintained by negative emotions. Thus, homeostasis is central to Bowen Family Systems Theory, and is reflected in the concepts of triangles, nuclear family emotional process, and multigenerational transmission process.

Feedback Loop

First advocated by Norbert Wiener (1894–1964) in 1948, cybernetics is interested in patterns and communication in a system. One of the key concepts is the feedback loop, which influenced Bateson’s family therapy.¹⁰

There are two types of feedback that maintain homeostasis in a family interaction pattern: positive and negative. According to Watzlawick and others, homeostasis is generally maintained by negative feedback, which plays an important role in maintaining the stability of relationships, while positive feedback leads to change.¹¹ Positive feedback works as an amplifier, encouraging change while a family is learning and growing, seemingly in a spiral pattern. Negative feedback reduces change and maintains the status quo of the system. The pioneers of family therapy understood this mechanism by which problems are persistently maintained in a family. How to deal with this mechanism is one of the key points of family therapy.

In Bowen Family System Therapy “[t]he information of three *interconnected* relationships can contain more anxiety than is possible in three separate relationships because pathways are in place that allow the shifting of anxiety around the system.”¹² Bowen’s theory presumes that negative feedback loops are elicited from *chronic anxiety* that makes the system dysfunctional and is found in multiple generations in a family history.

Process

Family therapy is more interested in communication patterns and interaction than in the contents of communication.¹³ Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson write:

Now, if it is accepted that all behavior in an interactional situation has message value, i.e., is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot *not* communicate. Actively or inactively, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot *not* respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating.¹⁴

In systems theory, process means “to change over time and includes the ongoing functions and history of a system.”¹⁵ For Bowen’s therapy, *process* is one of the most important concepts. Bowen’s theory pays attention to the process of interaction in a family, including the extended family, because the *process* expresses patterns of behaviors and reactions within the family. Nichols and Schwartz state that “Bowenian therapy is a process of active inquiry, in which the therapist, guided by the most comprehensive theory in family therapy, helps family members get past blaming and fault finding in order to face and explore their own roles in family problems.”¹⁶ Although Kerr and Bowen state that Bowen’s theory is modeled on natural systems rather than general systems theory, it is clear that Bowen’s systems theory is also a part of the large group of systems theories.

CASE STUDY

Introduction of Ajātaśatru/Ajase

It is widely believed that Ajātaśatru (Jpn. Ajase 阿闍世), who appears in the Buddhist story of King Ajātaśatru at Rājagṛha, was a real person in India. From the second to the fifth centuries C.E., Mahāyānists compiled new versions of the Mahāyāna sutras. Therefore, it is commonly said that many extant Mahāyāna sutras are of questionable historicity. More recent research, however, has revealed that quite a number of stories included in these sutras are indeed based on historical fact. The story of King Ajātaśatru appears in both the *Meditation Sutra* (Skt. *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*, Jpn. *Kanmuryōjūkyō* 觀無量壽經) and in the *Nirvana Sutra* (Jpn. *Nehangyō* 涅槃經). The majority of this story is currently regarded as essentially historical.

The general outline of this story is that a king and queen, Bimbisāra and Vaidehī, are unable to conceive a child and go to a seer for advice. The seer tells them that a certain hermit upon his death will be reborn as their son, the crown prince. Unable to wait for his passing, the king and queen murder him. Thus are planted the seeds of anger, betrayal, and hatred. The hermit on his deathbed vows to take revenge upon them. Realizing what they have done, the king decides to kill the infant. However, his human love overcomes his fear, and the king dotes on the boy. As a prince, Ajātaśatru is befriended by the Buddha's evil cousin Devadatta, who convinces the crown prince to plot to take the throne and become Devadatta's benefactor. The king cedes the throne to Ajātaśatru believing that his son will reign peacefully, but the newly crowned King Ajātaśatru throws his father into prison with the intention of starving him to death. When the new king finds out that his mother, Queen Vaidehī, has been smuggling food into Bimbisāra's prison, he commands the court barber to cut open the king's feet and torture him. Bimbisāra dies in agony, but when Ajātaśatru has his own child, he asks his mother Vaidehī about his father's love for him. When he learns of his father's great love, he breaks down in agonized remorse. Both the queen and the prince seek out the Buddha's teachings for relief from their suffering, and both become devoted followers of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Variations in this story will be dealt with below.

Ajātaśatru attempts to kill Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru's father, the former king, in malice. The main axis of human relationships in this story is father-son. The version of this story found in the *Meditation Sutra*, however, focuses on the mother-child relationship and describes how Vaidehī, who becomes an accomplice in the attempted infanticide of Ajātaśatru, suffers as a woman and is extricated from her torment by the teachings of the Buddha. While conveying Buddhist teachings, the story clearly depicts a love-hate relationship between parent and child. While such troubled relationships have been repeated throughout time and speak to fundamental pathologies of human nature, their complexities have yet to be fully elucidated, even through cutting-edge modern psychology. The particular Japanese slant on this story will be examined later on. Naoki Nabeshima states that this story, by addressing such topics as child abuse, misconduct, parricide, incitement, egoism, the sense of the accused, divination, and fatalism, depicts the socio-psychological reality of human beings across time.¹⁷

It is possible to say that this story represents a microcosm of human life in the present and shows that human nature has remained largely unchanged for thousands of years, even as specialists from different fields have searched for ways to educate people to be better. As Hiroi Takase suggests:

The human being is tormented by the gap between how he should be and the reality of how he is; he has but to anticipate what is to come, and take his chances. In *The Tragedy at Rājagrha Castle*, the same circumstances existed. Oedipus in Greek mythology meets the same fate as Ajātaśatru. Humans' agony goes on interminably. The *Meditation Sutra* is salvation for The Venerable [Buddhist Master] Honen, who sought the reason for the existence of human beings. Ajātaśatru's remorse corresponds to Shinran's statement in his *Gutokuhitanjukkai* (Hymns on Lamentation of the Bald-headed Fool), and also corresponds to the passionate wish for the Buddhist Pure Land, which is deeply embedded in the Japanese mind. One might very well find oneself in the same situation as the father king, Queen Vaidehī, and Ajātaśatru.¹⁸

By substantially increasing material abundance, modern science has brought about dramatic transformations in people's lifestyles, yet much of human nature remains unchanged and yet unexplored. The enduring vicissitudes of human nature can be seen through this story. Nabeshima has positioned this story as providing a meaning to live for when people lose sight of their goals and begin to look for the self.¹⁹

The Source of the Ajātaśatru Story

There are two perspectives from which the Ajātaśatru story may be analyzed: psychology, which focuses on Ajātaśatru's psyche, and Buddhism, which focuses on observing and construing human beings through religious discipline. Heisaku Kosawa, a pioneer of psychological studies in Japan, compared Freud's Oedipus complex to King Ajātaśatru's behavior, and he analyzed Ajātaśatru's psychological process by focusing on the notion of karmic failing. Kosawa developed the original idea of an Ajātaśatru complex, and Keigo Okonogi furthered this study.²⁰ Though the outline of this story is simple and clear, it is full of psychological subtlety. Since each scholarly interpreter tends to examine only a part of the whole story, the story is seldom covered in full detail. It seems that there are as many stories as there are experts.

India is the birthplace of the Ajātaśatru story, but as this thesis focuses on Japan, we will limit our discussion to the tradition of the Ajātaśatru story beginning with Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in which he reinterprets the story in accordance with his own observations of human beings and his thinking on how a person might be aided in their search for salvation according to Japanese cultural sensibilities. Miki-saburo Mori also claims that although it may seem that Shinran directly takes over all doctrines from Shandao, Shinran converts the doctrines into his own style.²¹ As mentioned above, Shinran also includes numerous citations to the *Nirvana Sutra*.

Kosawa and Okonogi's Interpretation of the Ajātaśatru Story

While Freud explains the Oedipus complex on the basis of the triad relationship among father, mother, and (male) child, Kosawa and Okonogi construct the Ajase complex on the basis of the dyadic father-son and mother-son relationships. In the Ajase complex, particular emphasis is placed on the mother-son relationship, which is characteristic of Japanese thinking in general. As mentioned before, Kosawa was a devout Shin Buddhist and was clearly influenced by Shinran's thought.

In the Ajase complex, Kosawa articulates two notions of failing. Since Vaidehī, the wife of King Bimbisāra in Magadha, had still not been blessed with children, she was gradually becoming apprehensive that Bimbisāra's affection for her would diminish and fade away. Finally she consulted a diviner about a successor, and the diviner implied that she would have a baby three years later who would be the incarnation of a hermit in the mountains. She could not wait for the hermit to die because she was not young enough, and so she commanded that the hermit be killed. In his last moment, the hermit was filled with resentment; her son, who is a reincarnation of the hermit, would kill King Bimbisāra in retaliation for Vaidehī's plot. As Vaidehī was apprehensive about the hermit's deathbed resentment, she plotted to kill her newborn son, Ajātaśatru, immediately upon delivering him. Having a narrow escape from death, Ajātaśatru grew up and met Devadatta, a jealous cousin of the Buddha who had joined the latter's movement, and who had watched for his chance to usurp the religious leadership of the sangha. Devadatta revealed to Ajātaśatru the facts concerning his birth. Incensed, Ajātaśatru captured and imprisoned his father, but a loyal vassal, by appealing to reason and moral principles, prevent-

ed him from killing his mother. After Bimbisāra died in confinement, Ajātaśatru fell seriously ill, his body covered with boils, and nobody could come close because of his powerful stench. Vaidehī, however, nursed Ajātaśatru back to health; as a result, Ajātaśatru seriously reflected on his conduct.

Kosawa articulates two notions of karmic failing in his psychoanalysis of Ajātaśatru: failing based on punishment, and failing based on reparation.²² The former notion is aroused by the action of Ajātaśatru trying to kill his mother, and the latter is aroused by Vaidehī being devoted to taking care of Ajātaśatru even though she was about to be killed by him. In the former, Ajātaśatru's attempt to kill his mother is a failing or transgression that can only be righted by punishment, including as seen through the eyes of the transgressor. In the latter, recognition of karmic failing takes place *precisely because* of being embraced, in this case, by the nurturing of the mother; the primary consciousness is the desire to make reparations, not the fear of punishment. The former fear justifies punishment; the latter seeks to repair by way of being embraced.

The Ajātaśatru Story in the Sutra of Eternal Life

The description of events preceding the birth of Ajātaśatru as found in the Kosawa version outlined above differs in significant ways from that in the *Meditation Sutra*. In the version found in the latter, it was King Bimbisāra, not his wife Vaidehī, who felt anxious about not having a successor and went to see the diviner. The diviner told him that after the death of a hermit in the mountain, Vaidehī would be expecting a child because of the hermit's reincarnation. Bimbisāra could not wait for three years and demanded that the hermit be killed. Bimbisāra was apprehensive and fearful when he listened to the hermit's death-bed resentment.

Ajātaśatru was enraged and imprisoned his father after he learned the secret of his birth from Devadatta. When Ajātaśatru knew that his mother Vaidehī secretly brought some food for Bimbisāra so that he could survive, Ajātaśatru was again enraged and tried to kill his mother. While Ajātaśatru desisted from killing his mother after receiving timely moral advice from a vassal, Bimbisāra ultimately died of starvation. Ajātaśatru regretted his actions and became seriously ill when he learned of his father's death. Nobody came close to Ajātaśatru because

of a severe odor caused by his illness; however, Vaidehī took care of him sincerely. It was then that Ajātaśatru recognized his own failing.²³

Ajātaśatru and His Family

In the study of human relationships or psychology, it is often appropriate to compare and contrast two factors. In some cases, however, it is more appropriate to broaden the analysis to include three or more factors. In traditional Japanese literature, there are a great many stories, ranging from classical prose fiction to modern novels, in which triadic human relationships take center stage. It is pertinent to observe and examine human relationships between two people in many cases, but dysfunctional relationships often expand to encompass three people. Kawai states in *The Hollow Center in the Depth Structure of the Japanese*²⁴ that it is a distinctive character of Japanese social structure that nobody unilaterally dominates the central position in a triadic relationship, a fact that makes this type of relationship especially stable. As mentioned *supra*, Kerr and Bowen argue that triadic relationships are typically more stable than dyadic relationships, and that when anxiety is predominant, people often intentionally form triads so that they can establish a more stable relationship.

Kosawa develops his Ajase complex theory focusing on the dyadic relationship between mother and child. In the Buddhist sutras related above, on the other hand, the focus is slightly different. Among the sutras, the *Nirvana Sutra* emphasizes the dyadic father-child relationship, and the *Meditation Sutra* emphasizes the dyadic mother-child relationship. In the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran describes the viewpoints of father, mother, and child; he deals, in other words, with a triadic relationship. The relationship between Ajātaśatru, Bimbisāra, and Vaidehī as found in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in which Shinran interprets the Ajātaśatru relationship triad using native Japanese and Buddhist sensibilities, may be analyzed in terms of fundamental elements of Bowen Family Theory, such as anxiety, emotional triangles, and the multigenerational transmission process. Using American cultural sensibilities and psychological theory Bowen developed these concepts in his interpretation of triad relationships. Application to the Ajātaśatru story will reveal the strengths and limitations of applying Bowen Family Systems Theory, which is rooted in American social norms, to the Japanese family triad.

Bimbisāra's Anxiety

When Vaidehī was expecting Ajātaśatru, a new triad relationship between father, mother, and child arose. Following Kerr and Bowen, one could say that “the anticipated birth can sufficiently disturb the emotional equilibrium in the marriage that one of the two parents gets into an unfavorable position emotionally.”²⁵ In Bimbisāra’s case, when the hermit was about to be killed, he told Bimbisāra that he would be reincarnated as his son, Ajātaśatru, and would kill Bimbisāra. Bimbisāra felt much more anxiety than the typical father would.²⁶ Before this incident, Bimbisāra was already very impatient and anxious about failing to produce a successor, and as a result, he hastened to kill the hermit. Only at the moment when he was informed that Vaidehī was expecting a child did Bimbisāra not feel anxiety in this familial triad relationship. Apart from that moment, his anxiety gradually intensified, ultimately driving him to attempt the murder of Ajātaśatru. This reaction can be taken as Bimbisāra’s flight from his anxiety. As Kerr and Bowen suggest, “In an anxious environment, people who want to make decisions based on a broad and long-term view are pushed aside by people who want quick answers and immediate relief from problems.”²⁷ Bimbisāra, without contemplation of the repercussions, made the evil decision to try to kill his own son.

Vaidehī's Anxiety

In the *Meditation Sutra*, Vaidehī approved of her husband’s wish to kill the new born baby after she delivered him: “Through this process, anxiety that begins first in one person can eventually manifest itself in a physical, emotional, or social symptom in *another* person.”²⁸ Bimbisāra’s anxiety entangled Vaidehī. It is difficult to imagine that she was calm after this failed attempt at murder. As Kerr and Bowen explain, “Distress that begins in the mother about some event in her personal life may be first reacted to by her most undifferentiated child.”²⁹ In this case, Vaidehī’s anxiety is reacted to by Ajātaśatru.

The source of Vaidehī’s anxiety is that she had helped carry out the nefarious plan to kill her own son in cooperation with Bimbisāra. Her anxiety was intensified by Ajātaśatru’s immature actions as he grew up, which Nabeshima expresses as follows: “He [Ajātaśatru] was of a violent temperament and did not in the least feel pain about killing people...and he lived a pleasure-seeking life.”³⁰ It seems that Bimbisāra and Vaidehī, who had not yet overcome their own failing, were in a

chronically uneasy state, for they were frightened of their punishment. As a consequence of this, it could be said that Bimbisāra and Vaidehī brought up Ajātaśatru in an emotionally warped situation in which they showed affection, but their affection was mingled with intense anxiety.

Ajātaśatru's Anxiety

The circumstances in which Ajātaśatru was raised were dominated by anxiety, and Ajātaśatru gradually became depressed. Both Bimbisāra's and Vaidehī's anxiety would surely have spread to Ajātaśatru.³¹ These led to Ajātaśatru's depression and immature actions; Devadatta, who harbored resentment towards the Buddha, then showed up and divulged the secrets surrounding the circumstances of Ajātaśatru's birth. Ajātaśatru came to understand the cause of his anxiety, and he began to doubt the sincerity of his parents and all that they had done for him including their shows of affection. Nabeshima explains that Ajātaśatru's malice was engendered by his rage against his father's false love and by the hollowness and loneliness that Ajātaśatru felt as a result of not receiving love from a reliable mother. When Ajātaśatru lost both his emotional ties to his father and any sense of togetherness with his mother, he became tormented and lost all reason for existence; his despair ultimately morphed into resentment and murderous intent.³² It resulted in doubts about being loved by his parents and in a deep anxiety over the isolation he felt at being bound neither to his father nor to his mother. Under sudden and intense anxiety, Ajātaśatru could not maintain calm judgment. In order to resolve his discomfort and regain emotional stability as quickly as possible, he confined his father. As Kerr and Bowen state, "While quick fix approaches often do relieve the anxiety of the moment, typically the problem soon returns and the same approaches no longer work."³³ This prompt decision on Ajātaśatru's part does not provide a permanent solution. Specifically, even if Bimbisāra physically disappears from Ajātaśatru's view, the root cause of Ajātaśatru's anxiety is not truly eliminated. Ajātaśatru utilized this hasty problem-solving method twice: once when he confined Bimbisāra, and again when he allowed his father to die because of his rage against Vaidehī's support for her imprisoned husband. At the moment his father Bimbisāra departed this world, Ajātaśatru was racked with feelings of remorse; he was not emancipated from his anx-

iety but rather felt it even more intensely. Ajātaśatru thus completely erred in his attempt to relieve his anxiety.

Buddha and Devadatta

In this story, there are two persons crucial to explaining the emotional triangle: Buddha and Devadatta. Bowen proposes the establishment of a therapeutic triangle as a problem-solving technique within a family. In a therapeutic triangle, the third person who has achieved differentiation of the self ultimately possesses the power to treat all family members within a problematic family. If the third person, however, feels uneasy, the intervention will instead amplify a given problem within a family: “This anxiety in the ‘helpers’ can increase symptoms in the family.”³⁴ In Ajātaśatru’s story, it was the Buddha who established a therapeutic triangle, and it was Devadatta who amplified Ajātaśatru’s family problems.

Emotional Triangles

As stated above, upon learning that Vaidehī was expecting a baby, Bimbisāra felt uneasy about the forthcoming triad relationship between Ajātaśatru, himself, and Vaidehī. As a result of his fears about his unborn son, Bimbisāra embroiled Vaidehī in his murderous plot. If this relationship was purely dyadic in nature, Bimbisāra would have killed Ajātaśatru by himself without involving his wife. Kerr and Bowen write that under anxious situations “functioning based on principle requires a tolerance of anxiety and a willingness to focus on the self.”³⁵ Bimbisāra could not manage his anxiety by himself; he embroiled Vaidehī so that he could lighten his emotional burden.

The triadic relationship between Bimbisāra, Vaidehī, and Ajātaśatru was unstable from the beginning. It was necessary for Ajātaśatru to meet Devadatta so that Ajātaśatru could ease his anxiety and obtain stability. Moreover, Devadatta also had his own strife with the Buddha. It was necessary for Devadatta to meet Ajātaśatru in order to relieve his own uneasiness. Ajātaśatru and Devadatta thus needed one another in order to obtain emotional stability. There are four identifiable triad relationships: (1) Ajātaśatru-Bimbisāra-Vaidehī, (2) Ajātaśatru-Bimbisāra-Devadatta, (3) Ajātaśatru-Vaidehī-Devadatta, and (4) Ajātaśatru-Devadatta-Buddha.

The original unstable triangle is the first of these. According to Kerr and Bowen, “It is not always possible for a person to shift the

forces in a triangle. When it is not possible, the anxiety spreads to other triangles in an interlocking fashion.”³⁶ Devadatta’s uneasiness regarding the Buddha requires the involvement of a third person in order for Devadatta to establish a stable state. Devadatta’s uneasiness easily connects with another unstable triangle such as (1). Consequently, the triads (2), (3), and (4) appear. Bowen calls these *interlocking triangles*. In (4), although Devadatta feels that he is in conflict with the Buddha, the Buddha has attained enlightenment; therefore, it is a unilateral dysfunction in which only Devadatta feels instability. Devadatta should have been a reliever for Ajātaśatru. However, he does not provide a solution for Ajātaśatru, but rather amplifies Ajātaśatru’s anxiety. Nabeshima also notes that Ajātaśatru’s hatred toward his parents was amplified by Devadatta, and Ajātaśatru became enraged not only because Devadatta revealed the circumstances of his birth, but also because Ajātaśatru felt emotionally insecure and unloved by his parents before he met Devadatta.³⁷

Multigenerational Transmission

Kerr and Bowen state that “If one member of a triangle dies, another person usually replaces him.”³⁸ When one individual among three who maintain an emotional triangle disappears, the emotional triangle itself will not break down but rather another person will assume the role of the lost member. In actuality, Ajātaśatru eventually fathered a son and took care of his child when the child became ill. In the same manner that Bimbisāra’s anxiety influenced Ajātaśatru, Ajātaśatru’s uneasiness would be reflected in his behavior toward his own son. After Bimbisāra’s death, Ajātaśatru would suffer for his compunction and uneasiness until he attained faith and became a Buddhist supporter. The whole of Ajātaśatru’s suffering would influence his son. Kerr and Bowen explain, “When a father gets anxious, he may direct his efforts to trying to get the child to ‘be happy.’”³⁹ This behavioral pattern will be represented by doting on his children (*kobon’nou*). Tamura elaborates,

Although “doting parents” appear to outwardly express parental love, their actions may be motivated by self-centered goals. In some cases, parents devote themselves to taking care of their children even to the point of extreme physical or emotional self-sacrifice. The sense of “my” child that permeates their behavior, however, suggests self-centeredness, and it does not seem to be genuine love in many cases.

The child, on the other hand, feels that there is a millstone around his neck and gradually develops hatred, and then the relationship between child and parent ends in tragedy.⁴⁰

It seems that Ajātaśatru burdened his son with his own sense of guilt over killing his father, Bimbisāra. It is not perhaps surprising then, as Nabeshima points out, that Ajātaśatru was later murdered by his own son. It does not seem that Ajātaśatru was stable during his son's childhood. Even though Ajātaśatru mended his ways, the seeds of dysfunction had already been sown. As Kerr and Bowen explain, "The multigenerational emotional process is anchored in the emotional system and includes emotions, feelings, and subjectively determined attitudes, values, and beliefs that are transmitted from one generation to the next."⁴¹ It is said that thereafter the pattern of patricide in the family of Ajātaśatru lasted at least three generations.

CONCLUSION

My findings in analyzing the King Ajātaśatru story through Bowen Family Systems Theory are that it is indeed possible to apply Bowen's theory to Ajātaśatru's story, which exhibits certain pathologies reflective of relationships defined in Asian and specifically Japanese Buddhist literature. However, I also find that there are key differences regarding views on the human being and human relationships between Bowen's theory and Buddhist ideas. The target of family therapy and other psychotherapies in the U.S. is an individual person and their relationships. Even though family therapy was launched while arguing against traditional psychotherapy, family therapy does not depart from the basic assumptions of mainstream Western psychology; it is based on an atomistic, scientifically-oriented outlook. Family therapists focus their intervention primarily on visible, verifiable problems of individuals seeking autonomy. Many Japanese who face personal trauma and dilemmas, however, are often less concerned with the exact nature or medical classification of their pathology and more fixated on the reason for its existence in the first place. In seeking therapy, their implicit question regarding their situation is often, "Why has this happened to me?" As Kawai explains, they really want to know "why" it happened, not "how" it happened, a question to which outward logic may never provide an entirely satisfactory answer.⁴² The Japanese are apt to observe and understand individuals in the context of their relationships among people. In the future, it will be necessary to examine whether

this inclination is particular to the Japanese, how much the Japanese have been influenced by Buddhism, and to what extent the Japanese have adopted Western ideas.

NOTES

1. Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation* (New York: Norton, 1988), 11.
2. Michael P. Nichols and Richard C. Schwartz, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2004), 119.
3. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*; Nichols and Schwarz, *Family Therapy*.
4. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 134.
5. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 95.
6. Don D. Jackson, "The Question of Family Homeostasis," *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement* 31 (1954): 79–90.
7. Paul Watzlawick, Janet B. Bavelas, and Don D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967).
8. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 95.
9. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 135.
10. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 95.
11. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*.
12. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 135.
13. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*.
14. *Ibid.*, 48–49.
15. William C. Nichols and Craig A. Everett, *Systemic Family Therapy: An Integrative Approach* (New York: Guilford Press, 1986), 75.
16. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 129.
17. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui* (Tokyo: Hōjōdō shuppan, 2004), 12.
18. Hiroi Takase, *Butsuon to Nihonjin*, trans. M. Yoshida (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo, 2003), 248–249.
19. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 13. When Kosawa developed his theory, he also changed the original story in order to interpret it as primarily a mother-child relationship, which better reflects the Japanese social context at that time, and which would make it easier for Japanese people to understand his theory. The Ajātaśatru story that Kosawa uses to explain his Ajase complex is not the same as that which appears in the Buddhist sutras transmitted from India to China and then Japan via Chinese translations. In the original Buddhist story, Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru's father, plotted to kill Ajātaśatru because Bimbisāra was seized by the anxiety that Ajātaśatru might kill him. In Kosawa's version, Vaidehī, Ajātaśatru's mother, plotted to kill Ajātaśatru because

of her anxiety that her son might kill her. However, the story presented by Kosawa in which the mother attempts to kill her son cannot be found in any Buddhist sutra. Thus, it is thought that the story in Kosawa's Ajase complex theory was, by and large, of his own creation. Although there is some criticism in Japanese Buddhist circles regarding such an amendment of scriptural authority, Kosawa himself was a devout Pure Land Buddhist and, according to Okonogi's research, many parts of Kosawa's Ajase story were referred to in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, written by Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, the largest sect of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Akihiko Sakurai, on the other hand, claims that Kosawa's story is very much like that found in the *Zangeroku* (Record of Repentance), a text written by Jōkan Chikazumi, a Pure Land Buddhist priest (Akihiko Sakurai, "Zaiakuishiki no Nisyu no Bukkyōteki Haikei," in *Ajase Konpurekkusu*, ed. Keigo Okonogi and Osamu Kitayama [Osaka: Sōgensha, 2005], 108). In either case, Kosawa would develop his theory based on a rearranged Ajātaśatru story so that he could more readily focus on the mother-child relationship, which was more intimately reflective of the typical pattern of parent-child relationships at that time in Japanese society.

20. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 13.
21. Mikisaburo Mori, *Rōsō to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Kodansya Gakujutsubunko, 2003), 274.
22. Keigo Okonogi, "Ajase Konpurekkusu ron no Tenkai," in *Ajase Konpurekkusu*, ed. Keigo Okonogi and Osamu Kitayama (Osaka: Sōgensha, 2005), 12.
23. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 48–82.
24. Hayao Kawai, *Chūkū kōzō Nihon no shinsō* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1982).
25. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 114.
26. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 70.
27. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 132.
28. *Ibid.*, 129.
29. *Ibid.*, 124.
30. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 84.
31. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 129.
32. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 12.
33. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 133.
34. *Ibid.*, 141.
35. *Ibid.*, 132–133.
36. *Ibid.*, *Family Evaluation*, 139.
37. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 176.

38. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 135.
39. *Ibid.*, 125.
40. Yoshio Tamura, *Gendaijin no Bukkyō: Nehangyō* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966), 33. My translation.
41. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 224.
42. Hayao Kawai, *Yungu Shinrigaku Nyumon* (Tokyo: Baifukan, 1967).

Affinities between Zen and Analytical Psychology

James Kirsch

Los Angeles, California

Editor's Note: With the kind permission of his son, Thomas Kirsch, M.D. (Jungian analyst, and member of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco), we reprint here the essay "Affinities between Zen and Analytic Psychology" by the late James Kirsch, a pioneer of Analytical Psychology in the United States. This essay, published in the journal Psychologia in 1960, was his contribution to a workshop on "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" held in Cuernavaca, Mexico in 1957. Three of the contributions to that workshop, those by Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and Richard De Martino, were published together under the same name as the workshop—Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis. Appearing as it did in 1960, right at the start of the widespread popularization of Buddhism beyond the limits of Beat Buddhism, this work has been highly influential in forming the field of Buddhism and psychology, as well as contributing to the construction of a psychologized representation of Buddhism. We are pleased to be able to reintroduce Dr. Kirsch's contribution to that conversation, a conversation that continues to grow today.

IN HIS INTRODUCTION TO ZEN BUDDHISM, D. T. Suzuki answers the question: What is Zen? by quoting from a letter by Yengo. "It is presented right to your face, and at this moment the whole thing is handed over to you. For an intelligent fellow, one word should suffice to convince him of the truth of it.... The great truth of Zen is possessed by everybody. Look into your own being and seek it not through others. Your own mind is above all forms; it is free and quiet and sufficient; it eternally stamps itself in your six senses and four elements. In its light all is absorbed."¹

Those who know what Zen is will immediately understand what is meant by these words but to the outsider, and especially the Westerner, these words remain a great mystery. And yet, as Suzuki acknowledges, there have also been men in the Western world who have found themselves and described their experiences in a different terminology, and at times also used similar expressions. Meister Eckhart is a notable example. In our time it has been C. G. Jung who, coming from psychiatry and psychology, has discovered that in the psyche of some individuals developments take place which lead to far-reaching illuminations. In trying to give an approximate understanding to the Westerner of what Satori is, he calls it also "acquiring a new viewpoint."

Western psychotherapy originated in the consulting room of the psychiatrist. He was confronted with sickness of the soul and discovered that healing could only occur if the suffering human being could acquire a new viewpoint. One could say that the distance between the old and the new viewpoint was sometimes small, sometimes very great. Zen speaks of Satori as a sudden and extensive change of the viewpoint. In psychological language one would say that lesser or mere significant contents can enter consciousness, and without a doubt the psychotherapist occasionally sees that an extraordinarily significant and numinous content enters consciousness and transforms the personality in a most remarkable manner. This is particularly the case when an individual has a sudden realization of that content to which Jung has given the name "Self" in contrast to the ego. Such an event would then be a Satori experience. The name does not matter really and I hope my Eastern friends will not mistake this for the "ego."

Clearly and admittedly the methods of achieving Satori are far different in the East and in the West for they naturally developed out of totally different historical conditions. To a certain extent Koans and many aspects of Zen discipline must appear rather strange, understandable and sometimes also objectionable to the Westerner. Of course the same is true of the Easterner's attitude towards Western methods. I want to speak here of a series on dreams which in their sequence describe a process in which ultimately a great amount of significant, unconscious material comes to consciousness and thus brings a radically new viewpoint, which to the Easterner might not seem to be very impressive but which in the experience of the dreamer brings about an illumination. What Suzuki writes of Zen is equally true of the process of individuation as it occurs in some Western individuals. Suzuki says:

“Unless, therefore, you devote some years of earnest study to the understanding of its primary principles, it is not to be expected that you will begin to have a fair grasp of Zen.” Both approaches try to do what Richard of St. Victor emphasized: “If thou wishest to search out the deep things of God, search out the depths of thine own spirit.”²

My patient had found herself “cornered” in a situation which could not be solved by conventional or rational means, and to which the Unconscious proposed an unexpected solution. Quoting again from Suzuki: “The Zen method of discipline generally consists in putting one in a dilemma, out of which one must contrive to escape, not through logic indeed, but through a mind of higher order.”³ The patient was in her middle thirties and had come to analysis for several years, mostly twice a week, during which time a great number of personal and practical problems had been adequately solved. With the solving of these problems and with the clarification of essential aspects of the life situation, one could have accepted the patient as “cured” but she hung on to analysis and felt that she had to go on with her treatment. In such a case one can be sure that a most numinous content has “constellated” itself in the relationship between analyst and patient and it becomes vitally necessary to make this content conscious. One would fail as a physician if one simply cut the patient off and sent her, as it were, back into the world. Both the patient and the doctor must discover the nature of this content and with patience and devotion bring about its realization. In this situation the dreams are extremely helpful. First dream:

“There was a marvelous piece of music or writing that needed to be retrieved. This piece of writing rested in a grave between the hands of someone who had died and been buried. I planned to retrieve it and in this dream saw myself as a man, strong and capable of it. At first I had no qualms or conflict about such a grisly undertaking but yet when you (analyst) asked me why I delayed, I replied, ‘Well, you know actually it isn’t a very pleasant task to rob a grave!’ And then I began to think just how unpleasant it was, for it would mean entering the grave with my own body and I envisioned the earth itself and what I might find. I continued talking to you: ‘But it is such an extraordinary piece of work that is there, I feel I must do it,’ and so saying, I undertook to get it. The details are not clear, but I know that I accomplished it.”

The patient is here given a task. There is no mention of who gives the task. It is simply stated that “it needed to be retrieved.” The ob-

ject to be retrieved is characterized by two aspects: it is a piece either of music or writing. That is, it is a content of emotional and spiritual quality and at this point receives no further characterization. The patient has to bring the content back from the beyond (death), that is, in a psychological sense from beyond consciousness (the Unconscious). Suzuki says, "That the process of enlightenment is abrupt means that there is a leap...the psychological leap is that the borders of consciousness are overstepped and one is plunged into the Unconscious which is not, after all, unconscious."⁴ The dream then describes her plan of how to go about this task. She feels she has to be strong, even to the extent of changing her sex. At first she has no conflict about it but feels it is something she has to do in close cooperation with me, the analyst, to the extent that she feels my presence in the dream and addresses me as "you." It is then that she realizes a great deal of negative feeling about this "grisly" task, for she would have to enter the grave fully. It is only her awareness that this piece of work is of an extraordinary character that enables her to overcome her negative feelings and correct her courage. The dream ends with a certain vagueness but yet with the feeling that she has accomplished the task. Dream nine days later:

"I saw a river flooding towards me; it was a muddy yellow color. I raised myself and begin to swim in the direction of its current so that I would not be submerged, and then the sun polished all the facets of the water's reflections to a shiny yellow."

In this dream the Unconscious is symbolized as a river, i.e., as a dynamic process. At first there is a conflict between her and the dynamism of the process (the river is flooding *towards* her). The river is her libido and has a specific color: "a muddy yellow." In its psychological meaning, the yellow represents intuition (in her case the so-called inferior function, the least differentiated of the four functions described by Jung in his *Psychological Types*).⁵ But yellow is also associated with healing. For instance, Paracelsus speaks of the flower "Cheyri," which symbolizes healing.⁶ In Chinese meditation yellow frequently refers to the Self (The Golden Castle).⁷ I presented my patient with these associations in order to avoid an intellectual limitation of the symbol. In any case a change of attitude occurs here in the patient. From now on her ego goes *with* the current of the river and, concomitantly, something occurs in the non-ego. The sun polishes all the "facets of the water's reflections to a shiny yellow." The ego's change of attitude also effects a change in the non-ego. Dream same night:

“I explored the cellar of my childhood home. Step by step I saw again each detail: the furnace, the coal, the coal-shute, the washtubs, the bathroom, the water outlets. Then I explored the outside garden and the steps leading to the porch. I was searching for memories. Emotions came back to me—slightly sad—but I could not discover anything traumatic or too dreadful to think about.”

The dream takes her back to her childhood home, somehow to the fundamentals of her childhood psyche (cellar). She sees then in detail symbols which have to do with the two elements fire and water; the coal as the accumulated basic energy, the furnace as the container which transforms this black natural material into fire (energy), and different tools in which the water is set and which function for the use of water. In this way she becomes aware of basic memories of her childhood and of basic energies. Since she was afraid that there might have been something pathological in her childhood, the dream is rather comforting since it assures her there was nothing traumatic or dreadful, but that this recovery of her childhood would allow her to feel certain emotions which she had repressed for a long time. Dream the following day:

“I am driving somewhere in my car—long, empty, lonely stretches. It is not daylight but not really dark, although progressively darkening. Suddenly I am on a huge divided highway with faint lights placed at spaced distances, and I become frightened. I think someone has misled me onto this road, which would take hours for I would become lost. I have the feeling that once before I have taken this road and become lost. The division curves into opposite directions and I take the one to the left. I arrive someplace where there are people and now the simplest of my movements seems to produce a completely irrational and unexplainable entanglement with objects. For example, when I park my car I have a distinct feeling of having parked too close and having collided with another car. But there is no physical evidence of damage. Instead this contact has produced—from me—as if by magic—the deposit of a pink scarf on the other car. I want to avoid talking to the people there but I keep being placed in irrational contacts with them. The second incident is my picking up and examining a watch belonging to a woman there. No sooner do I raise it in the air than near the face and partly upon the bracelet of the watch is deposited a blob of deeply-colored jelly. My feeling of strangeness is that I did not *see* the jelly placed there; it simply materialized; it is there and gives the impression of having *been* there; but it also was

not there before I picked up the watch. Who put it there? Someone? Me?"

In this dream the entering into the Unconscious is described as a path that leads into the dark. The gradations of consciousness are described as "progressively darkening." There she comes to a typical division of the roads (Scheideweg). She must make a fateful decision. The nature of her further experience and the course of her psychological development depend on which road she takes. Just in time she remembers that once before she was taken on the wrong road and then became confused and lost. This time however she decides to take the turn toward the left, to continue in the direction of the Unconscious, and in the Unconscious she encounters "people" (= personified complexes of the Unconscious) and realizes that every action of the ego has an immediate effect upon other contents of the Unconscious. Ego is understood here in the sense of Jung's definition of the ego as the center of consciousness. In the dream she gives different examples of such encounters which are obviously of psychical nature. The impression she has is that these happen by "magic," clearly evidencing the mutual effect which the ego complex and other contents of the Unconscious have upon each other. She gives two distinct examples: There is a collision between her car and another car—and as if by magic (a psychic event without any lapse of time)—there is a pink scarf on the other car. I understand this pink scarf as "feeling" in contrast to sexuality, that is, a feeling relationship now exists between the ego-complex and other complexes in another part of her personality. Since the ego is within the different complexes of the Unconscious, irrational contacts occur. Through this interaction of the various complexes a change of the whole personality is initiated. She uses the term "irrational" in the sense of the German word "irrational." The second incident brings the problem of time. Out of the Unconscious, again without lapse of time, something occurs which has no time: "A blob of deeply-colored jelly is deposited on the bracelet of the watch." It is undifferentiated psychic material which is "eternal." It carries a much stronger feeling-tone than the pink scarf and she is now filled with very powerful numinous feelings. Actually she tries in simple and beautiful language to express that something has materialized out of nothing. In picking up time (the watch) she also picks up no-time, or eternity (the blob). The dream ends then with the significant question, "Who put it there?" She an-

swers, "Someone? Me?" But this "me" is obviously not the ego. Dream four weeks later:

"I am seated on a couch watching television, together with several friends. Suddenly it is as if I have been transported to another setting: A party is taking place in an extremely large banquet like room which takes up the complete circumference of a building. I note with surprise that the motif of this party has been to provide individual sunken bathing pools for each guest, and I see that I am myself lying in one. I must have been prepared for it for I am enjoying it to the fullest extent because I suitably am wearing no clothes. We can all lie comfortably in our individual pools and listen to the host who sits talking to us. I gather he is some kind of potentate in order to have furnished such luxurious settings.

"The scene changes and I am expecting word from a man who has had to leave hurriedly. When I am told there is a letter from him for me, I search for it in a huge bag. Another man is trying to help me find this communication and we search together. We retrieve from the bag the beginning of a white scroll made of indestructible plastic-like material. It keeps rolling out and out as if there were no end to it. We keep pulling it out, searching anxiously for the writing on it—but there is no writing! We can only conclude that the writing has been washed away since the scroll had been placed among wet clothes in the bag.

"Then there is another party, this time with dancing."

The first part of the dream describes a most comfortable, lazy situation. The main interest is to be entertained and amused. She enjoys the situation to the "fullest extent" and her attitude is that of the pleasure-loving guest of some fabulous host. This host is described as "some kind of potentate." In our analytical terminology he would represent an animus figure (opinions and attitudes) who is mainly interested in an expression of the pleasure principle. Described here is the sort of life which has no meaning, where one lives for the moment and on the most superficial level. An interesting point in this description is that this large banquet-like room is described as circular and that every individual guest has his own sunken bathing-pool. It corresponds most beautifully to the drawing that Prof. Suzuki gives in his book *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* to illustrate a kind of thinking which is particularized; one in which a series of events is experienced each separate from the other and from the totality of the human being. Whichever way one looks at this symbolic drawing or the situation in the dream one can see it as a perfect description of a psychological

state in which the ego is in the center. It is the very opposite of totality. Pleasure-loving and divorced from the wholeness of the psyche, the ego is seduced into this isolation by the potentate-animus who incarnates the pleasure-principle.

But then a change occurs in the dream, and the significant and meaningful content enters again into consciousness. She is expecting word from another man; from another type of animus figure. It is again a letter, a piece of writing, as in the first dream. It is a message which is most significant and takes her out of the deceptively comfortable situation. She retrieves this letter which turns out to be a white scroll made of "indestructible plastic-like material," and which seems to be infinite. But since her ego is still ignorant and her consciousness obscured by the "potentate," the articulate expression of the message has been washed away and she is unable to understand it. And so the end of the dream returns to a situation similar to that of the beginning of the dream with the difference that dancing is added. But the principal subject of this series of dreams, the scroll of writing, has again been brought up as the most valuable content. She is searching for it but for the time being it is lost due to her egocentric attitude. Dream two nights later:

"I receive a series of letters which I read and study carefully. The black-ink writing on the white sheets seems rather shaky and the composition of the letters seems weak, but the content is so filled with emotion that I am deeply moved. It touches feelings I had experienced many times."

This dream takes up the same motif even more fully and more dramatically. This time it is not one letter but a series of letters which, in the dream, she reads and studies carefully. The writing is there but seems "rather shaky," and so much emotion enters into the letters that her consciousness is affected by these emotions. They bring back memories of emotion she had in earlier times but which had been repressed and had disappeared from her conscious life for a long time. As in the first dream, the work of art has to be retrieved. It is also writing, but the music is replaced by emotion. It is the same content but the emotions are quite different. No more does she feel this as a "grisly undertaking." On the contrary she is deeply moved by the spiritual content. When she awoke from this dream she could not remember the text of the letters. In order to bring it back to her mind she did what we call "active imagination":⁸

“It was my guess that the shaky writing and the poor composition could only come from someone who was in the grip of such a strong emotion he had little strength left to guide a pen carefully, or to express himself fully. Was it a man seated at a desk, his head now resting on his outspread arms? I looked at the letters again and saw the ink begin to fade perceptibly before my eyes. I quickly snatched at some of the words, trying to write them down hastily because I knew that some magic was going to erase it all almost immediately and my memory would correspondingly lose the original message. I worked in a kind of panic and was capable of retrieving only fifteen or twenty words before the print was completely obliterated from the sheets. It was amazing how, once the words were isolated, they became alien unknowable clues, and the context of the letter already lost.

“Working against time and resistance I sought to write anything I could possibly associate the words with, and a more difficult time I have never spent. The words I had been able to capture—and not in the proper sequence of their appearance either—were: dealt-mirror-undergrowth-formidable-replica-stealthily-write-full-length-commend-inevitable-sacrosanct-beseech-suffering-delayed-immobile-shades-princely.

“Seventeen words. First I tried pairing the words together by their contrasting qualities or by their similarity. But I could see at a glance none of them could be coupled. Rather their texture was one of continuity.

“I begin to piece together: I write at *full-length* to *beseech* that *sacrosanct* things are *inevitable*...but then I notice that *full-length* could just as well pertain to *mirror*. It’s no use at all to go on with this guesswork. I must simply start a train of thought and weave the words in somehow. And the following is what suggested itself to me:

“I have *dealt* with some *formidable* things in my time, but never has a more *princely* gift been presented to me. A *mirror* which is a *replica* of *sacrosanct* waters. I *beseech* you to *commend* such an offering to a *suffering* soul who can no longer remain *immobile*. Were it not that the *undergrowth* has various shades, its *full-length* size would not have been so long *delayed*. To *write* is then *inevitable* and no longer undertaken *stealthily*.”

So finally she has found that piece of writing which has been lying in her unconscious and to which the dreams repeatedly referred. Naturally it has a powerful meaning for her since it has been the leitmotif of this series of dreams, but what is indicated here is a gift of the future. It is a princely gift. It is a mirror, and a very special mirror—“a replica of sacrosanct waters.” It is interesting to note that Zen Buddhism makes

wide use of the symbol of the mirror. Suzuki says: “Dhyāna is Prajñā, and Prajñā is Dhyāna, for they are one.... It is like a brightly-shining mirror reflecting images on it. When the mirror does this, does the brightness suffer in any way? No, it does not. Does it then suffer when there are no images reflected? No, it does not. Why? Because the use of the bright mirror is free from affections, and therefore its reflection is never obscured. Whether images are reflected or not, there are no changes in its brightness. Why? Because that which is free from affections knows no change in all conditions.”⁹ The patient’s mirror is the *numinosum* which exists everywhere and exists in her in its fullness. It is the consciousness of the Unconscious or the no-mind or universal mind, as Zen expresses it, the mirror which “needs no dusting.”¹⁰ In our psychological language we would call it the Self. The writer of the letter beseeches the patient to commend such an offering (the mirror) to her suffering soul, which under this impact can no longer remain immobile. She can allow herself to move again and to have emotions. Were it not for the fact that the undergrowth—that is, different parts of her psyche which remained undeveloped and even misdeveloped—has various shades (different qualities), then these psychic faculties would have developed long ago. In other words, the undifferentiated part of her psyche would now have a chance to develop fully. The effect of accepting this mirror, the no-mind—or as we could also say, making the Unconscious conscious—would allow her inferior function to develop fully and she would then be able to write. That is, quite literally she would be able to fulfill her artistic capacities and would no longer have feelings of guilt about her creative abilities. But beyond this specific gift of writing, the very fact that the symbol used here is that of mirror of sacrosanct waters indicates that more is meant than the development of any special function. What is meant is the breakthrough of the whole human being. The experience of having received the seventeen words and the inspiration under which she wrote this had the character of a revelation. This piece of writing in itself represented a widening of consciousness, but not yet the full breakthrough of the Self. That is rather indicated in the text of the writing for the future and requires a great deal of further work. Nevertheless, it is psychologically of the greatest significance that this woman had now such an experience and that such a goal is set for her. I therefore believe that the path proposed by the Unconscious of this Western woman has the same validity for her as that of Zen for Japanese psychology. In its final analysis this

is the aim for both East and West, classically described by Zen-masters as Satori, and by Jung as the fulfillment of individuation. And I believe that Suzuki would accept this conclusion because he has acknowledged that the Satori experience has also occurred in the West, for example in Meister Eckhart.¹¹

We in the West accept dreams, images, and imagination altogether as a fruitful path which eventually, when fully and intensely pursued and accepted by the human being, will lead to Satori. The East has rejected the images, which occur during meditation. It has used method of Koans to strip the ego of all illusions and to throw it, as it were, into the abyss and into the terrible conflict. We in the West have not yet, and perhaps never will, develop such a method but will accept the language of dreams which nature, the Unconscious, proposes. And if the individual human being gives his all to this process it will lead to the same result.

NOTES

1. D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider & Co., 1957), 46.
2. *Ibid.*, 43.
3. *Ibid.*, 69.
4. D. T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), 185.
5. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1923), 563.
6. C. G. Jung, *Paracelsica* (Zürich and Leipzig: Rascher Verlag, 1942.), 86 n. 2.
7. Richard Wilhelm and C. G. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931), 98.
8. Active imagination:
 - a) C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 7 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 220, 387.
 - b) C. G. Jung, *Practice of Psychotherapy*, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 16 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 199; C. G. Jung, *Aion*, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 39, 323.
 - c) C. G. Jung, *Psychology & Alchemy*, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 12 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 243, 244, 262, 333.
 - d) C. G. Jung, *Practice of Psychotherapy*, 199; *Aion*, 39, 323.
 - e) J. Kirsch, "Journey to the Moon," in *Studien zur Analytischen Psychologie Festschrift C.G. Jungs*, 2 vols. (Zürich: Rascher, 1955), 1:319.
9. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, 182.
10. *Ibid.*
11. D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian & Buddhist* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), chap. 3.