

The Idea of Compassion

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The paper discusses the Buddhist notion of compassion through an analysis and critique of the Mahayana doctrines of bodhisattva (enlightened beings) and upaya (skillful means). While it recognizes the importance of the soteriological context of the concepts considered, it proposes both the possibility and necessity to look beyond this original meaning to one encompassing the social-historical dimension. It is only in this way can the notion of Buddhist compassion contribute to a discussion of salvation in the fullest sense of the word. The process thought influenced by A. N. Whitehead as well as the Liberal Protestant tradition have influenced the development of this discussion.

Key Words: Buddhist Theology, History of Buddhist Thought, Buddhist social ethics, Process thought, Inter-religious dialog

I Introductory Remarks

The Buddhist concept of compassion (*karuna*; 慈悲) is a central element in the whole tradition. In personal reflections on the doctrine of Amida Buddha and on a Buddhist social ethics, it was inquired into and reflected upon at length and has therefore been at the center of my concerns and work for some time. While the Whitehead-Hartshorne-Cobb tradition of process thought was never too explicit, it was, however, implicit in the development of those thoughts on and criticisms of traditional Buddhist conceptualizations and articulations of compassion and social ethics. The problem focused on and developed here is the problem of the concretization of compassion in the history of Buddhism as it took root in a variety of societies. The image of this endeavor is one that re-readings of Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas* have developed for me (thus, the title of this paper). It is both a descriptive endeavor as well as a speculative one as I look at the history of Buddhist thought and see how the idea of compassion has come to the forefront and center of the tradition. However, this idea of compassion, for some unfathomable reason, has rarely been fully concretized as the ideas whose adventures Whitehead so vividly discussed became. It is this concretization into the fabric of our social history, small and faint

though it may be, that is assumed to be important in this discussion.

The Mahayana Buddhist concepts of *bodhisattva* (菩薩) and *upaya* (方便) are examined to understand the dynamics of compassion. How these two ideals developed from early Buddhism is pursued, noting both continuities and discontinuities. As Buddhism spread and developed from India into far east Asian cultures and societies, these concepts evolved and affected these new cultures as well. From these historical foundations, I attempt to translate the material from times past to the problems and situations of our present-day society. By reflecting on Whitehead's analysis, I attempt to ameliorate the situation in the Buddhist context and present a more consistent, meaningful and hopefully relevant notion of compassion ever mindful of the concrete actualities of our present situation. Moreover, in looking at the position of process thought, the problem of how we apprehend this idea of compassion is also considered. Using the technical language of process thought, how does one apprehend the eternal objects so as to get out of the rut of constant repetition of the past and see the possibilities of something new. Through such prehension, do the ideas whose adventures Whitehead discusses become actualized.

II The *Bodhisattva* Ideal

The *bodhisattva* (one whose intent is not only for personal enlightenment but enlightenment for others) is a central element in the Northern or Mahayana Buddhist tradition and is usually compared to the *arhat* (one whose intent is on personal enlightenment) in the Southern or Theravadin Buddhist tradition. This Mahayana ideal will be focused on noting the background and basic meaning of the term and ideal in the earlier strata of the whole tradition as well as the subsequent Mahayana development as it spread into northern and far east Asian cultures and societies. The main source for this discussion is a volume of essays on the *bodhisattva* doctrine based on a conference on its evolution. (Kawamura 1981) The opening essay, the inaugural address for the conference, is the only essay in which, in a simple, straight-forward manner, the image of compassionate concern and activity in our daily lives that resonates with our general understanding of the term compassion is related. (Kawamura 1981, 1 A Catholic nun who the speaker knows is said to be, "...on the path to sainthood" or if she were a Buddhist, "...on the way to becoming a bodhisattva." for her work as a superintendent of a Catholic school system.) The speaker is a western trained student of Buddhism and philosophy of religion and indicates that he is Christian (Protestant). It is significant that a Christian trained in Buddhist thought made this illustrative remark. That emphasis on the actualization of and concrete expression of love in one's life is central to a Christian ethic. When a practicing Christian thinks of compassion or love it is this concrete and everyday expression she immediately thinks of. I make this

point because all subsequent essays do not talk of the compassionate activity of the *bodhisattva* in such concrete and simple terms. The soteriological or spiritual emphasis is the center of the discussion with cosmological and metaphorical elaborations that give some of the discussions an other-worldly cast. It is this basic attitude or understanding of the tradition (I do not question textual support for it) that I hope to confront and consider.

The word *bodhisattva* has two possible meanings, a being whose essence (*sattva*) is wisdom (*bodhi*) or considering the Pali expression, *bodhisatta*, a being whose intent (*sakta*) is to achieve wisdom. The latter meaning derives from two points or problems. While the Pali *bodhisatta* is the form found in the literature and while it is natural to assume that *satta* corresponds to *sattva*, there are other possibilities one being *sakta* which means 'attached to' or 'devoted to'. The second problem which necessitates questioning the above assumption of *satta* corresponding to *sattva* is that for the Theravada, the *bodhisatta* has yet to achieve enlightenment or wisdom. Thus, in the earlier strata of the tradition, *bodhisatta* is the Buddhist practitioner intent on wisdom and so is still on the path to wisdom. (Kawamura 1981, 21-22)

The term *bodhisatta* is found in the *Jataka* literature and is used to indicate the previous incarnations of the historical Buddha Gotama while still on the path toward the final achievement of enlightenment. (Kawamura 1981, 22-27) Although the term cannot be found in the earliest stratum of the tradition, its usage can be supposed to have already become current by the third century B. C. E. (Kawamura 1981, 24) Thus, at a relatively early point in the tradition, the use of the term *bodhisatta* can be discerned indicating 'historical' past lives of the historical Buddha Gotama as the eventual enlightened-one worked out his enlightenment over eons of practice. While there are numerous motifs in the literature, one major theme is the performance of generous deeds of compassionate activity to benefit others. Thus, the act of doing good, compassionate even sacrificial deeds as one prerequisite paving the way toward enlightenment is related in a relatively early stage of the tradition in a popular form in rather concrete and unequivocal terms.

The Mahayana development of the *bodhisattva* doctrine centers not on the trans-historical practitioner-incarnations of Gotama endeavoring toward his eventual enlightenment that was the Theravada focus, but on the equally trans-historical beings whose essence is wisdom that are the enlightened ones of the future. The notion of past practitioners leading to Gotama and his enlightenment naturally gave rise to the notion of enlightened beings in the future which accordingly led to the notion of beings who are presently going through practices to become these future Buddhas. (Kawamura 1981, 27-32) The existence of the historical Buddha Gotama, first, led to the assumption of past forms of existence leading to the enlightened Gotama. This in turn led to the assumption that there must be future enlightened ones which led finally to

the conclusion that there must be present practitioners who will become these future enlightened ones. The Mahayana emphasis turned from the past to the future and present. There is an added element to the Mahayana discourse which complicates but enriches the discussion. There also arose a tradition of the existence of a myriad of trans-historical Buddhas pre-dating Gotama and therefore a myriad of practicing *bodhisattvas* that eventually became these Buddhas. The *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra* is the primary illustration of this development.

The concern for compassionate acts towards others is continued in the form of the transfer of merit accrued through practice toward the attainment of wisdom. The practitioner/enlightened one transfers this personally gained merit to others on the path or even to devout laypersons. The soteriological or narrowly religious context is clearly enunciated. This act of merit transference is forthrightly denied by the Theravada tradition in theory. This, then, is purely a Mahayana practice/doctrine closely associated with the notion of the *bodhisattva*. The notion of merit transference from the enlightened *bodhisattvas* (buddhas) to lay believers as well as practitioners still on the path toward enlightenment became a central fixture of the developing Mahayana tradition. A. L. Basham makes an interesting point that the rise of this idea of merit transference in the Mahayana tradition coincided with a period of general Indian resistance toward karma and its implacable hold on the individual. In the frightful and chaotic period when this doctrine was establishing itself, real compassion and aid to others could only take the form of freeing another from the strangling bonds of birth-and-death, in short, deliverance from this painful existence. The good deeds of the Theravada were considered too feeble to do any real good. (Kawamura 1981, 37) Thus, through this merit transferred from a *bodhisattva*, one could gain release and attain wisdom. By the first century of the common era, the compassion of the *bodhisattva* was essentially this bestowing of one's merit accrued through practice toward enlightenment so that the faithful could break the bonds of karma. (Kawamura 1981, 32-37) The earlier concrete and straightforward notion of compassionate acts related in the *Jataka* literature developed into an exclusively soteriological or spiritual notion of compassion.

This soteriological emphasis is important. The Buddhist notion of compassion should definitely be understood not merely in the common sense of the word but in the context of its soteriological efficacy. Nevertheless, it has been my conviction that the full sense of soteriological efficacy must include this common sense of the word because salvation must be for the entire person: body, mind and spirit. Besides, if the word compassion is to be used it should have some connection with its ordinary nuance or should not be used. "In his finished form the *Bodhisattva* not only helps and guides men in obvious and practical ways, but also devotes the immense store of *punya* which he has gathered over countless ages, to their welfare." (Kawamura 1981, 32) This statement by A. L. Basham alone can be taken in many ways and may have the

meaning I am hoping for. Nevertheless, taking the whole context into consideration, it is the soteriological concern that is being emphasized with its statement of the transference of merit towards others' salvation. In a very interesting and in many ways important paper K. Tanaka makes a similar point in countering charges of a lack of ethical concern on the part of Shin Buddhism. In his analysis, the soteriological emphasis is also espoused and is used to counter the charge of ethical disinterest on the part of true Shin followers. (Jackson and Makransky 2000, 346-363) I will discuss this essay and point of view at more length in part 6 (p. 15). While religious salvation is in the end, no doubt, the most enduring and fundamental form of compassionate activity, the secular salvation from real evils that can be accomplished and should be attempted must also be a concern of compassionate activity. Religious salvation should include an awareness of this secular evil and some kind of attempt at confrontation and resolution of it. To borrow a Christian motif, while the good news of the Bible has a spiritual message, a social gospel, a gospel not merely centered on individual spiritual salvation but on a salvation both spiritual and secular of the larger social and global sphere, is needed and must also be declared.

The development of this idea of bodhisattvas and buddhas aiding one to final enlightenment through the transfer of merit is a central soteriological motif in the developing and developed Mahayana. The appearance of *Maitreya* (P. *Metteyya*), the *bodhisattva*/buddha of the future, is already found in the Pali cannon albeit with "all the marks of lateness." (Kawamura 1981, 28) With the appearance of this foremost example of a future enlightened one, there arose simultaneously an early notion of cycles in time devolving into a period of spiritual and secular chaos that marks 'the end of the *dharma*', an intermediary eschaton leading to the appearance of *Maitreya* and the dawn of a new age and the beginning of the cycle again. In addition to this future buddha, there are primordial buddhas like *Amitabha/Amitayus* who has an uncountable retinue of *bodhisattvas* among whom *Avalokitesvara* (*Kwan-yin/Kannon*) and *Mahasthama-prapta* are the most famous. (Kawamura 1981, 31) The appearance of these figures of salvation, especially in the case of *Amitabha* and *Avalokitesvara*, in east Asian cultures, marked a decisive and formidable rise in a cult-worship like adoration of and appeal to these figures for salvation in these times of 'the end of the *dharma*'. The idea of compassion became central to Buddhism and it was this idea of soteriological and spiritual compassion that was central. Again, it seemed that a merely ethically centered idea of compassion offered by practitioners and enlightened ones was just too feeble and useless to gain solace and reprieve from the hopelessly depraved situation one found oneself in. Real compassion and by extension real ethical behavior must be that which will gain one transcendental escape from the chaos and horror of the times.

The parallel with Christianity in the late Middle Ages with invocation of saints and adoration of a variety of relics is undeniable and reflects the social and spiritual uncertainty of the times

and the hopelessness felt in both instances. Luther in his 'faith-alone' re-discovery and emphasis began a process of demystification. The soteriological emphasis, however, if anything, was even more emphasized. Shinran's own 'reformation' of the tradition also began the same process of demystification and also emphasized the soteriological orientation of compassion. Basham makes the point that this reliance on these figures of salvation should not be belittled from our modern day standpoint and indicates that the great scholar-priest Hsuan Tsang was, "...constantly invok(ed)ing the Bodhisattva Kwan-yin in the face of robbers, storms or demons, and was invariably preserved from danger." (Kawamura 1981, 31-32) While it is important to be conscious of our modern-day 'prejudices' or standards as being different from those of the past, the need for change, if warranted, in our traditional standards must be recognized and attempted. The solely soteriological emphasis of compassion or love, for better or worse, must be re-oriented toward our present-day emphasis on a socially aware and caring love or compassion. In short, the soteriological and the social-ethical positions must both be recognized. Christianity has been most recently conscious of this need from at least the advent of the liberal Christian movement that was the Social Gospel (the late 19th century onward with the 60's and 70's liberation theologies being the most recent manifestations). Buddhism has not as consciously or thematically seen the same need. Buddhists in Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Euro-American Buddhists had or have begun such re-thinking of the tradition. However, the traditional schools still stress the soteriological or spiritual intent of compassion with scarcely a consideration of the social-historical context.

The classic rejoinder to this lack of ethical concern is the Mahayana doctrine of returning to this world and not dwelling in or being attached to enlightenment/nirvana. One is thereby free to save all creatures. (Kawamura 1981, 62-64) Again, the exclusively soteriological meaning of saving creatures is being advanced. To the extent of my knowledge, while returning to this world is oft-times referred to in regard to describing what a *bodhisattva* is, there is no concrete explanation of what is entailed by this return to this world. Indeed, I am not sure whether the concrete soteriological meaning of this return is really given. It is just assumed. What, indeed, is this compassionate saving? While I realize it is ridiculous to expect a standardized guidebook explaining what compassionate salvation is, demanding more concrete descriptions of the compassionate life is desirable and needed. What does Buddhism have to say about some of the urgent issues that face our lives and planet today? Perhaps, in the example of Shin Buddhism, to share the joy of the life of the *nembutsu* with others may be the most compassionate thing to do, indeed, the only thing to do, (Jackson and Makransky 2000, 354-356) but is that what Shin Buddhism ultimately wants to say about the world we find ourselves in and how we should react to it? I do not think it is and will try to develop a complementary position to this soterio-

logical answer. As a prelude to that attempt, the doctrine of *upaya* or skillful means will be discussed.

III The Compassion of *Upaya*

The discussion of *upaya* will also attempt to look at the pre-Mahayana precedents for this central Mahayana concept and ideal of skillful means as well as the Mahayana development. Previous work published and unpublished on *upaya* and the two-truths as well as M. Pye's work on *upaya* will be the basis for the following. The title of this section connects compassion with *upaya* and is the starting point and basis of the ensuing discussion. Pye makes a good point, however, in commenting that while the tradition, especially in Japan, tends to see *upaya* in terms of compassion, in looking at its use in the *Prajnaparanmita* (wisdom) literature, skillful means is necessarily connected with the working of wisdom not with compassion. (Pye 1978, 102-117) This is important to keep in mind. Wisdom fulfilled is a wisdom used. Through the attainment of wisdom, skillful means, for the first time, are skillful and effective. The wisdom attained is a wisdom not content to be a self-reflective or self-absorbed wisdom but a wisdom flowing out of itself. The inherent activity of wisdom is reflected in the activity to implement this means to be as skillful as possible. It is as if wisdom must come out of itself to express itself as well as possible. Pye's point is well taken, wisdom is the foundation of skillful means. Wisdom is active, however, and it is in this activity that wisdom and compassion become one. Wisdom is compassionate and compassion is wise. If this were not the case, then neither would fulfill the function of its meaning.

The pre-Mahayana use of the term *upaya* is quite infrequent and no real connection with the Mahayana usage can be confidently deduced from it. The term *upaya* itself has a common every day usage apart from its technical usage. In a carefully worked out and precise chapter on this topic of the pre-Mahayana existence of the doctrine, Pye says there is an underlying and primal notion of the idea to be found in Gotama's decision to proclaim the teaching after his enlightenment. (Pye 1978, 118-137) I have personally seen this decision to teach on the part of Gotama as the primal event of Buddhism and thus the paradigmatic example of *upaya* and the expression of Buddhist compassion. (Hirota 2000, 81-86) Gotama himself, in all probability, did not use the term *upaya*. Yet, it is not too unreasonable to make the simple claim that he did teach about the content of his enlightenment and how to attain it. He did not keep it a secret, but it became public property as it were. What is meant by saying that this is the primal event of Buddhism is quite literal. Buddhism began at that point and Gotama expressed its essence in the decision to teach and affect others. This teaching of the enlightenment is the skillful means of the enlight-

ened one. As such, it is the prime example of compassion. What is compassion but the wisdom of enlightenment enlightening others about itself? The compassion of *upaya* that is the teaching of enlightenment is the compassion of the *bodhisattva* using varied and ingenious means to enlighten others. Again, the soteriological intent of compassion and by extension *upaya* is primary and undeniable. The doctrine of two truths will be introduced to help understand the dynamics of *upaya* more fully. It is also the intent to confront a problem about its nature that may be peculiar to Japan: 'a lie may also be skillful means' (嘘も方便).

The doctrine of two truths (*satya-dvaya*; 真俗二諦) has a long history in the tradition and like *upaya* has its roots in early Buddhism, if not in terminology then in practice. The usual sense of the doctrine is that the two truths or realities are: (1) ultimate reality and (2) secular or ordinary, everyday reality or in different contexts provisional truth/reality. Thinking about the duality expressed in this doctrine carefully, however, there really is finally only one reality: reality itself and its pale and partial and thereby false constructions. Moreover, looking at the use of this doctrine in the history of Buddhism, we can see its similarity to the Christian doctrine of the two realms. Secular powers were given sanction by the Church, since they were the provisional reality here on earth and therefore demanded obedience. The two truths doctrine has been similarly interpreted. Needless to say, these sanctionings of secular powers through the use of religion were a result of the perversion of the doctrine. While perversions, they were understandable in the context of this dualistic view of reality. If a dualistic view of reality is offered where there is ultimate reality and its sanctioned provisional form, then the latter must be that which is valid in our secular world. Accordingly, the absolute is valid only in its realm of the trans-social and trans-historical. There is no relationship between the two truths and between their respective realms. Unfortunately, the purely soteriological understanding of compassion leads to such a dualistic conclusion: leave matters of heaven/ enlightenment to God/bodhisattvas and leave secular matters up to the people or their leaders. Because of these problems in the orthodox understanding of the two truths doctrine, a re-thinking is in order.

The off-hand remark of a teacher (UEDA Yoshifumi: How can you call them the two truths when one of them is ultimately false?) led to the study of the doctrine of the two truths in both its Indian and Chinese sources. A summation of this study was published some years after the actual research (Ishihara 1989). The admittedly unorthodox definition of the two truths is that ultimate reality is the inexpressible ultimate itself and the second, mundane, truth is the teachings about this reality, the teachings of the enlightened ones, the *buddha-desana*. After a rather long time reflecting on what this designation meant and the meaning of other related matters, the following position on one aspect of Buddhist reality evolved. Reality is ever revealing and expressing itself. There is an active, revelatory quality about reality. Indeed, reality is

one, yet in a variety of ways it reveals itself. The teachings of the enlightened ones are, of course, the most concrete expressions of this revelation, indeed, self-revelation. Moreover, there are other, in a real sense, more direct ways in which reality gives us an idea of itself. The use of process thought in my elaborations of the doctrine in part 5 will touch on these other ways a bit more. This outgoing character of reality, this interaction with us is a vital and central aspect of what reality is. This is what the doctrines of two truths, *upaya*, indeed, what compassion tell us about reality. Reality comes to us. To put it from the opposite standpoint, we grasp what reality is or at least we grasp aspects of what reality is from reality itself. We take in reality as it reveals itself to us. It is this active quality of reality that these doctrines help us to understand. While Pye is rather wary of an etymological analysis of the term *upaya* (Pye 1978, 12, 106-108) some Japanese scholars have referred to the root *upa-i* (to approach, to come near) to analyze the meaning of the term. I have personally found it suggestive and is the basis for the immediately preceding discussion and its language. The ‘coming near’ and approaching of reality is *upaya*. The skillful means of the *bodhisattva*, the compassion that is the topic of this paper, is based on this activity of reality as it approaches to reveal itself. (Yokota 1999, 29-30)

IV The Social-historical Dimensions of Compassion

The preceding discussion of the *bodhisattva* ideal and the doctrine of *upaya* have shown the central place of compassion in the tradition. It has also shown the exclusively soteriological context in which compassion is active. The influence Buddhism has had on cultures it has come in contact with and still influences is not negligible. Nevertheless, like most of the so-called major religious traditions in the world today, it has lost much of its power to hold on to its adherents and care for the emotional and intellectual needs of them let alone add new followers to its numbers. In these radically secular times, this may be understandable. Nevertheless, the unease and uncertainty of many if not most people in the so-called ‘advanced’ societies in the world cry out for the kind of help that religious traditions have traditionally offered. Moreover, the responsibility of these societies for the chaos and destruction of the physical and spiritual livelihood of ‘the other half of the world’ needs to be acknowledged and addressed as well. The proposal that I offer in suggesting the emphasis on and addition of the social-historical dimension to the exclusively soteriological understanding of compassion is one way to begin a renewal and revival of the tradition. It is also a needed addition to help us face up to the grief we have caused in other parts of the world. This endeavor, of course, flies in the face of current realities. The central importance of the forces of inward-looking fundamentalism in the revival of religious traditions throughout the world cannot be denied. The social historical dimension that

the Liberal Protestant tradition came to emphasize brought too much of the world into its sphere and may have diluted its message. Nevertheless, it is this liberal endeavor to be true to one's intellect and conscience as well as to one's emotions that is important. The question why the social-historical dimension should be a consideration of compassion as well as how this will affect our understanding of compassion will now be addressed.

The soteriological emphasis of compassion discussed in section two above is the basic Buddhist position, indeed, other religious traditions as well, explicitly or implicitly, emphasize the soteriological nature of love/compassion. The three monotheistic traditions drawing inspiration from the Jewish Bible put equal emphasis, however, on the love of justice as well as the soteriological character of acting in love. It is in this demand for justice, for good or bad, that these traditions call for acts of love. Many problems, admittedly, arise with this emphasis on justice and righteousness. The demand for righteousness for the wrong reasons or in the wrong hands can lead to a frightening witch-hunt like Puritanism. Nevertheless, the social-historical consciousness while including the call for justice and righteousness also includes inherent safe-guards that can help guard against over-zealous or wrong-headed campaigns demanding righteousness.

What is salvation in Buddhism? It is to become enlightened. How does one awaken to enlightenment? One must engage in religious practices. It is in this simple, formula-like truism of Buddhism that the answer to why the social-historical dimension should be a consideration of compassion can be found. At the same time, this formula indicates the basic reason why there has been a healthy scepticism about considering compassion apart from this soteriological context.

The nature of the reality awoken to in the enlightenment experience is not open to simple description. Indeed, it is not open to any description at all. The tradition has discussed it in a variety of poetical, metaphorical as well as analytical ways, however. The consensus while far from being unanimous, can, at least from a Mahayana position, be described as a vision of interpenetrating, interdependent entities of existence open to each other and the whole. It is an ever-changing flux of existence, flowing into and out of existence in a momentary flash. Yet things are; they are not nothing. This vision of reality implies certain things about who one is and about one's relationship with that in which one finds oneself that cannot be ignored. Everything is intimately related to one's own existence. If this is our world as seen through the insight of wisdom, then this wisdom dictates that we live fully conscious of the way things are and act accordingly. The 'other' being a real part of oneself should be accorded a respect and dignity we would expect for ourselves. To act in accord with this reality in which we live would be the way things should be. It is here that a basic foundation for or guideline of ethical behavior can be found.

The above was one-sidedly spatial in conceptualization. There is also a temporal inter-relatedness that is implied by this Buddhist vision of reality. The past impinges upon the present and the present is impinging upon that which will be. Both spatially and temporally, there is no isolated entity. Both spatially and temporally every entity is in a context. Its acts influence other entities in that context and these others influence it, in turn. In such a way is the recognition of the social-historical context we find ourselves in fully supported by the Buddhist view of reality.

The Buddhist tradition does not necessarily see it this way, however. The descriptions of the enlightened state vary but one quality that is central is the claim that the enlightened one is freed from the restrictions of conditionedness. There is a freedom from the social-historical context that all others find themselves in. One is able to rise beyond all prejudices and assumptions of one's age and culture and be a truly and literally free person. I have come to see this as a metaphor, however. It is not literally true. On the contrary, the enlightened one would seem to be the person who sees the full extent of one's own existence bound by the ties of history, custom, habit, yes, and even the prejudice that afflict all people. It is, paradoxily, because of knowing one's real state and accepting it that one becomes as free as possible in that boundedness thus achieving a metaphorical yet strangely real freedom. It is only when one realizes the restrictions and prejudices of one's social (including gender and ethnicity) and historical background that the possibility of rising beyond them becomes real. It is in this insight into who one is and what constitutes one's existence that a freedom in a metaphorical sense becomes possible. Literal freedom from these conditions is not possible. One carries one's social and historical 'baggage' wherever one goes. To achieve literal transcendence from one's social-historical conditioning is religious rhetoric and should be seen as such.

What is salvation in Buddhism? It is to become enlightened. How does one awaken to enlightenment? One must engage in religious practices. It is practice that must be considered now. It is this element that has spawned healthy scepticism about considering compassion apart from the soteriological dimension. The insight that is enlightenment is soteriological in character: it is for one's spiritual release. This insight into the way things are is not meant to be a guidebook for ethical behavior. A too facile incorporation of this insight (in most cases indirect insight since one has not had this insight oneself but indirectly through the medium of teachings) is cheap ethics, not worked for at all. I acknowledge that the above and what follows is indeed cheap ethics, ethics bought on the cheap. Nevertheless, I see a real danger in Buddhist tendencies to take a stance above ethics thus leaving the impression that anything is allowed, since in the end everything is the same. Moreover, institutionally, Buddhism has given its support to sometimes dubious attitudes and acts without too much reflection or remorse. In short, it has

taken ethical stands which would seem to have been ethically wrong. There is a pious stance taken as one situates oneself artificially above ethics and the variety of decisions made and to be made in the social-historical realm we find ourselves in. To abstain from making such a decision and going through the struggle to see what is the best way to act is to abstain from being a responsible person. This is something no one should do, for whatever reason. Again, cheap ethics is no real alternative. Nevertheless, in this struggle to become a responsible, active member in one's social-historical world, a form of practice, the practice of a struggling, unsure person of evil passion can be engaged in. We join the struggle to lead a compassionate and good life, hopefully, without too many illusions.

V The Idea of Compassion

Compassion is that which flows from the mind of enlightenment. All unenlightened ones indirectly know what compassion is through descriptions of it. However, apart from this, we have an idea of compassion, learned in a variety of obvious and subtle ways through the processes of acculturation. Yet, where did this idea and others like it come from? Did they come from the struggle of human beings as they stumbled through life over the eons? Yes, but again where did they come from? The processes of the universe are varied and random and seem to lead mostly nowhere yet in this process there also seems to be some direction toward intensity and harmony. Again, where does this come from? The adventures of ideas is a long adventure which has neither beginning nor end but is a constant struggle for definition, concreteness and actualization. Where does this force toward concretization come from? The God of process thought is not imposed on the system but is a necessary element needed to explain fully the system, to explain why things are the way they are. (Cobb 1965, 176) The randomness of nature is true, yet in this randomness, what direction there is comes from something beyond this randomness. This source is God for process thought. Each occasion of existence incorporates this aim or direction from this unifying principle that is God. Intensity and harmony are the basic ideals that constantly seek balance in the incorporating processes of all existents. Thus, we incorporate the idea of compassion from God and the seeds of the idea are within us pushing us toward some form of actualization. Humanity has had this idea of compassion for ages sometimes actualizing it and sometimes ignoring it, yet it has endured and kept on claiming our attention however for a short time. The idea of compassion that is grasped from God is what humanity is acting out. To consider Amida Buddha as primarily and primordially the embodiment of compassion as the tradition has done can be expanded into seeing Amida as the God of process thought offering us a vision of compassion to actualize. Moreover, while it may be too much (and too facile), to see

Amida as the God of process thought luring and calling us to a compassionate intensity of existence, it may be a needed creative expansion of the understanding of Amida Buddha for our tradition.

The haphazard stumbling around that is the advance of humanity may not need outside input to weave its way to the actualization of compassion, yet compassion seems neither to be innate nor naturally and merely coming about through social forces. The hint of compassion is from compassion itself as individuals from their depths seek out a primordial compassion they feel in the universe.

Process thought has no uniform position on how God is able to be prehended (grasped) whereby we come to 'know' of these aims toward which we should advance. Yet prehended it is. (Cobb 1965, 163) The problem is that if as Whitehead insisted that one sees God as an entity of existence (actual entity), then God would instantly perish at the moment of actuality (satisfaction). However, God is never 'finished'. Whitehead was definite in claiming that only the past, i.e. completed entities of existence could be prehended. Since God is ever becoming as it acts in and is acted upon by the world, then God can never be finished and be a past entity to be prehended. Lewis Ford in a recent book has outlined the problem and several positions among process thinkers that attempt to deal with this problem of prehending the eternal objects extended to us from God. His own intriguing position, in many ways, turns the problem around, yet offers, I believe a viable alternative. In searching for the prehensibility of God, process thinkers have the option to look to the present or past.

Charles Hartshorne's position of seeing God prehensible in the past has been the most influential solution involving, however, the rejection of Whitehead's insistence that God is an actual entity. Cobb like Hartshorne, sees God not as an actual entity but "...as a living person. A living person is a succession of moments of experience with special continuity." (Cobb 1965, 188) Ford amplifies Hartshorne's position thusly, "Each divine occasion fully prehends all those occasions that have just come into being, as well as prior divine occasions. Since each divine occasion, like every other actual occasion, integrates and unifies its many prehensions into one determinate satisfaction, this satisfaction may be prehended by succeeding generations of occasions. Thus, not only God's primordial orderings but God's particular responses to particular situations can be communicated to the creatures." (Ford 2000, 187) Thus, God can be prehended in the satisfaction of each successive moment of the unending series of actual entities that make up the living person that is God. It is in this prehension of the past and therefore prehensible moments in the everlastingness of God that one can come to grasp the aims that God calls us to. Whitehead himself explicitly rejects the option of thinking of God as a society, however. (Ford 2000, 187) Ford notes a number of objections both from within Hartshorne's own positions

as well as from relativity physics. (Ford 2000, 190-205) His principle objection is, however, based on the unexamined assumption that God's effectiveness in the world is posited on God's prehensibility. Moreover, he sees this objectification of God undercutting God's pure subjectivity. (Ford 2000, 190) The option of prehending the present has many proponents, but Marjorie Suchocki's creative attempts to see God as reversing the process of becoming through a reversal of the physical and mental poles is in many ways representative of them while being interestingly creative. The usual process of becoming and coming to satisfaction in actual entities is that becoming leads to satisfaction, but the actual entity God proceeds from satisfaction to becoming. Thus, though God is forever becoming, God can be prehended in its primordial satisfaction, and therefore, the eternal objects can be prehended into the becoming actual entities. Ford's objections while rather technical essentially object to the static nature of that which is prehended. (Ford 2000, 156-166)

Ford personally chooses to see God as future and thus as imprehensible. "(By the "imprehensibility of God" I mean the totality of God as the integration of physical and conceptual feelings, for while Whitehead recognized the imprehensibility of divine physical feeling he affirmed that God as primordial could be prehended.)...There are many other modifications entailed by my alternative, including the dissolution of the primordial nature, but the reaffirmation of divine everlasting concrescence is most central to my endeavor. It is the most radical form of pure becoming." (Ford 2000, 190)

It is this imprehensible future that nevertheless influences our decisions. We are always going toward the unfulfilled future and so fulfilling it as we go. (Ford 2000, 240-263) I must admit to not fully understanding Ford's position, since he discusses the perhaps incomprehensible. The truly indefinite and unfixed future in the pure becoming of God is truly imprehensible and by definition not open to full expression. He notes his position's similarity to that of Wolfhart Pannenberg's idea of the future. Pannenberg sees the resurrection of Jesus as the proleptic yet fulfilled act of the future. Ford, in note to me, wrote that he does not fully agree with Pannenberg. I would imagine it is precisely in this fulfilled nature of the future that he finds fault. (Ford 2000, 303-305) For Ford, there is no idea of the future in this fixed sense, it is totally open and ever becoming and it is in this radical openness and uncertainty that the promise of the future is truly active. It is, therefore, imprehensible. In his repeated caution about our human-centered projections onto the future, I think we find one reason for this radical openness of the future he adheres to. The idea of compassion is much like this. It is the unfulfilled toward which we are pulled to fulfill. It is not our idea but the idea of the universe and so must be sought out and fulfilled. This open-ended quality of the imprehensible God seems to concur with the relative power of God inherent to the conceptuality of process thought. We are called to a

compassion that no one entity can actualize and so in conjunction with God/Amida we work toward that ever-becomingness that is the ideal.

I must think about Ford's position and my own interpretation more. What had always been the source of uncertainty for me in process thought was this idea of the prehensibility of the eternal objects on the part of actual entities in the process of concretion. The imprehensibility of God while turning the problem around seems to offer a way to see a future radically disconnected from the past and thus offering real novelty to break away from the rut of mere repetition. The Buddhist idea of compassion would certainly be a break-through novelty if ever actualized. This radical uncertainty of the future would seem to fit in well with certain Buddhist ideas of the future. Moreover, in Ford's discussion of time, the unilinear notion need not be the only way to understand time in Whitehead. Ford's freely flowing direction of time would seem to be quite amenable to some Buddhist notions of time as well.

VI Epilogue: Notes on the Emphasis of the Concretization of Compassion in Recent Studies

While I had stated that the ethics of compassion were not concretely evident in the tradition, there has been some interesting, recent work beginning to rectify the situation. In a volume of essays on engaged Pure Land Buddhism, two papers were of special interest. The first by T. Unno, while a survey of a variety of issues that Pure Land Buddhism must face, notes the social-historical dimension inherent in the present situation of Pure Land Buddhism both in Japan and in North America. He calls for an in-depth look at the past record of the Honganji and its need to reflect on and repent for its mistakes so it can go on to the future in a more vigorous and confident manner (vigorous and confident because it has done the right thing). For the Honganji missions, they must reflect on their insular ethnicity and see how they want to be and must be in the future. This includes reflecting on the continued adherence to the Edo era *Shugaku* dogmatics in these times and in these new places. He assumes we must investigate new ways to think about and develop the teachings. (Tanaka and Nasu 1998, 3-26) M. Unno in the same volume writes on SUEKAWA Hiroshi and his form of engaged Pure Land Buddhism. Suekawa, as an opponent of the Pacific War, felt that he must leave his post at Kyoto Imperial University in protest over the firing of a colleague for anti-war sentiments. Later in life, becoming rector of Ritsumeikan University he took action in attempting to stop the riot police from coming on campus during the student sit-ins of the late sixties and early seventies. The portrait that Unno paints of this scholar is one of applied and engaged compassion. (Tanaka and Nasu 1998, 67-87) The paper noted above in part 2 (p. 5) by K. Tanaka while, again, an important

paper in many ways, mistakenly takes the charge of lack of concern for others or a lack of an ethical sense in Buddhism in a way that the assertion of teaching others the name of Amida so as to gain salvation to be an apt rejoinder. This is no different than fundamentalist Christians saying that bringing the good news of the gospel to those who do not have it as being an ethical good. It is condescending. The stress on soteriology is important and basic. Nevertheless, one must be wary of this and this alone being an expression of ethical concern and action. The social-historical awareness that are apparent in the two Unno papers is lacking. It is this consciousness that is necessary as we look again at our tradition and try to make it concretely concerned and caring about the world around it.

The idea of compassion nudges us personally and nudges us as a whole to concretize it in our religious lives, yes, but also into the social-historical realm that we all must participate. This we should do in an open, caring and, yes, compassionate way

Note: An early draft of Part 5 was presented at the annual meeting of the Japan Society for Process Studies, October 8, 2000.

Note on non-English terms: Those terms that have not become familiar in English appear italicized but without their diacritical marks

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