

COMMITTEE III Responding Paper to Dr. David J. Kalupahana;
"The Buddha's Conceptions of Reality and Morality"

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Dr. Kalupahana presented his paper on "The Buddha's Conceptions of Reality and Morality" comparing with the modern philosophers' way of thinking about the conceptions of the objectivity and subjectivity especially the view of them by Thomas Nagel's The View from Nowhere(Oxford, 1986).

Dr. Kalupahana says;

The pendulum has swung in different directions. If we start from the subjective side, we are said to be confronted with the problems of skepticism, idealism or solipsism. If we are to begin with the objective side, we are faced with a different set of problems. We need to accommodate the individual, his perspective as well as the perspectives of others in a world that is generally looked upon as being neutral, objective and perspectiveless...page 1.⁽¹⁾

According to Thomas Nagel, Dr. Kalupahana quotes, "Reality is not just objective reality. Sometimes, in the philosophy of mind but also elsewhere, the truth is not to be found by travelling as far away from one's personal perspective as possible" (page 2)

The point of discussion is how the reality should be looked upon either objectively or subjectively. As Kapupahana pointed out Nagel discerns the reality rather being neutral. The Buddha's conceptions of reality started from the doctrine of non-self or non-soul (anatta). He denied the ego or self which was affirmed by the Upanisadic thinkers as the ultimate reality of the self

(ātman). Dr. Kalupahana quoted that passage from Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad; "In the beginning this was only the self (ātman) in the form of a person. Looking around he saw nothing else than the self. He first said "I am! Therefore, even to this day when one is addressed he says that "this is I" and speaks whatever other names he may have." (page 3)

This idea to admit the self is resemble to the Cartesian "ghost in the machine" which was repudiated as a result of a landmark treatise by Gilbert Ryle entitled The Concept of Mind according to Kalupahana. Likewise, Buddha denied the self as non-self. And he adopted the principle of dependence (paṭiccasamuppāda) which is intended to get rid of the "ghost in the machine" without, at the sametime, abandoning any part of the machine.

Kalupahana quotes the aim of objectivity from Nagel; "The aim of objectivity would be to reach a conception of the world, including oneself, which involved one's own point of view not essentially, but only instrumentally, so to speak: so that the form of our understanding would be specific to ours, but its contents would not be." (Page 10)

Dr. Kalupahana commented to the Nagel's view that "While he was willing to let go the ghost in the human machine, he is not prepared to let loose the ghost in the world machine. The early Indian thinkers as well as Descartes were consistent in their philosophical enterprise in trying to retain the ghosts in every instance."

He further commented "Buddha abandoned the ghost in the human machine with his theory of non-self (anatta)...in the meditations that eventually bring about more accurate knowledge and understanding,

the initial as well as the most essential step is the avoidance of the substance/quality or primary/secondary distinction..." (page 11)

Buddhism emphasized to have the Three Learnings namely Precepts, Meditation, and Insight. Precepts are necessary for providing the following Religious Practices in terms of Meditation and Insight. Chinese T'ien-t'ai Master Chih-i⁽²⁾ (538-597) made his commentaries on the Lotus Sutra, the Fa-hua-hsuan-i⁽³⁾ (T33.681-815), the Fa-hua-wen-chu (T34.1-151). The former text is the Principle Meanings of the Lotus Sūtra while the latter is the commen^taries on the Lotus Sūtra based on the wor^ds and phrases of the sutra. Finally he composed the text for Meditation, the Mo-ho-chih-kuan (T.46.1-40). Chih-i discussed about how to deal with the Ultimate Reality for the practitioners in his Mo-ho-chih-kuan as follows;

The Perfect and Sudden Calmness and Contemplation

The perfect and sudden calmness and Contemplation means to relate our mind to ultimate Reality from the very beginning. Any object of our minds is in fact identical with the middle way and there is nothing which is not the Ultimate Reality. Unite (your subjective) condition with the Dharma-realm (dharma-dhātu)! Identify your single moment of consciousness with the Dharma-realm! Then you will realize even any single color (or Form) or odor is nothing but the middle way. Realm of self, the realm of Buddha and the realm of sentient beings are also the same middle way. The five aggregates and the twelve entrances are all Thusness, so there is no Suffering to be

cast away. Since Ignorance (avidya) and defilements (kleśas) are identical with enlightenment (bodhi), there is no cause of Suffering to be eradicated. Since the (two) extreme (views) are the Middle (Way) and false views are the Right (View), there is no way to be cultivated. Since birth and death (saṁsāra) is identical with nirvāna, there is no Cessation of Suffering to be realized. Because of no existence of Suffering and of its cause, the mundane does not exist. Because of no existence of the Way and the Cessation, the supramundane does not exist. There is only pure Ultimate Reality. There is no other dharma except the Ultimate Reality. Tranquility of Dharma nature (dharmatā) is called Calmness (śamatha). And the Tranquility being lustrous is called Contemplation (vipaśyanā). Although we may speak of beginning and end in terms of meditation practices, there is no duality, nor difference between them. This is what is called "perfect and sudden Calming and Contemplation!" (T.46.1c-2a)⁽⁴⁾

Chih-i's interpretation of the Ultimate Reality derived from the Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra (Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra) which was translated by Kumārajīva (344-413) in 406. Kumārajīva translated the sanskrit word dharmatā as Ultimate Reality in Chinese. Of course, Chih-i followed the translation by him. His meditation is characterized in such expressions as Three thousand realities in a single moment of consciousness or Triple Views (Views of Emptiness, Provisional and Middle) in a consciousness. He followed Nāgārjuna's view of the Middle Way.

Returning to the paper, Dr. Kalupahana introduced Vasubandhu

and Nāgārjuna's ideas about the object; "Vasubandhu's characterized the object as a concept (vijñapti)"p.13. or Nāgārjuna equated conception (prajñapti) with dependent arising (pratītyasamutpāda) p.14" These conceptions are based upon the Buddha's view of conception as a means of stepping outside the metaphysical subject (pudgala-nairātmya) as well as the metaphysical object (dharma-nairātmya). In other words, Buddha's message about self is non-self and he denied the self subjectively and objectively. And non dual awareness of both subjectivity and objectivity is interpreted as Reality. However, we should keep in mind that Buddha's concerning about the world means the eye and material form, ear and sound, nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and tangible, mind and concept, that is , the six forms of sense experience.

Dharma referred to the moral ideal

Dharma in an ethical sense denoted good while a-dharma meant bad or evil. Dr. Kalupahana quotes[^] interesting simile of the raft (kulla) for the reason that dharma does not always mean an absolute; "the Buddha argues that a person builds a raft only for the purpose of crossing over a stream. If, after crossing over, the person were to carry the raft on his shoulders whether he goes insisting that the raft was useful and, therefore, he should not abandon it, that person would not understand the function of the raft. p.23. Logically, the raft has no meaning apart from the context. However, without the raft no body could not across the river. Mahayanists admit the value on the raft as a benevolence.

There are the Six Bodhisattva Ideals in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, namely Giving, Morality, Patience, Diligence, Meditation, and Wisdom. According to Kamalaśīla (750-794ca) who introduced the Process of Meditative Actualization to Tibet from India, he defined the first five Ideals as upāya or skilful means, and the balanced practice of both upāya and prajñā (Wisdom) provides Perfect Liberation (mokṣa). Thus the Perfect Liberation can be attained by the union of Means and Wisdom in the method of Calmness (śamatha) and Discernment (vipaśyanā). (Robert F. Olson and Masao Ichishima; The Third Process of Meditative Actualization⁽⁵⁾ by Kamalaśīla, Sogobukkyokenkyujo Nenpo No.1.1981 Taisho Univ. p.234). During the reign of the King K'ri sron lde bstan (718-780 A.D.) there were two different traditions of Buddhism in Tibet. One was the Chinese tradition of meditation named the Sudden Path (Ton-mun), the other being of Indian origin, commonly referred to as the Gradual Path (Tsen-min). The Hva śān represented the Sudden Path, while Kamalaśīla, invited to Tibet from India, argued on behalf of the Gradual Path. The debate was held at Sam-yas monastery in the presence of King K'ri sron lde bstan, some[^]time during 792-794A.D. Chinese Hva śān insisted only prajñā (wisdom) is important and the other five Moral Ideals are the teachings for stupid. Then Kamalaśīla repudiated against Hva śān that wisdom and Means are the root of all the vehicles. Repudiating the Means negates the Path of Bodhisattvas...etc. Tibetan Historian Bu-ston (1290-1364) concluded the debates that Kamalaśīla's Gradual Path became the Tibetan Buddhist tradition while the Chinese Sudden

Path was not permitted as a Tibetan Buddhism and Hwa śāṅ was sent back to China. (E.E. Obermiller; History of Buddhism (chos-ḥbyung) in India and Tibet by Bu-ston, Heidelberg, 1932, pp. 195-196)

It goes without saying that Buddhism emphasized Compassion.

Bodhisattva does not wish to stay at nirvāna or mokṣa, instead he or she comes back to saṃsāra (world of suffering) in order to save all sentient beings out of ^{their} Suffering^s. This idea of ^mCompassion (karuṇā) becomes identical with upāya in the tantric tradition in India.

The interpretation of the sentient beings for Dogen(1200-1253), Japanese Soto Zen Founder extended the concept of [^]sentient beings from man, animals, even to all ⁽⁶⁾things[^]. From such Dogen's point of view, the raft has also Buddha Nature. So we should appreciate the benevolence of the raft crossing them over river.

The concept of Buddha Nature developed from non-self to rather positive sense of the self via prajñā emptiness. That is to say the process investigating Form (rūpa) to Emptiness (śūnatā) requires Wisdom (prajñā) while Emptiness to the Form emerges Compassion (karuṇā) in the Heart Sūtra. Such a positive sense of Reality and Morality could be characteristics of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Dr. Kalupahana concluded that for Buddha, the noble and the fruitful way of life is represented by a carefully conceived middle path that will contribute to the welfare of oneself as well as of others. This is a more enlightened form of ethical pragmatismⁿⁱ.

Dr. Kalupahana is a professor of philosophy and Buddhism.

This presentation is beyond my knowledge to respond his paper.

But I appreciate that Dr. Kalupahana presented me such a wonderful orientation about the concept of subjectivity and objectivity in comparison Buddhist Way of thinking with modern western philosophy especially that of Thomas Nagel.

I wonder how such concept of Nagel can be realized through his experience.

Notes;

- (1) page No. is from from the pater, David J. Kalupahana; "THE BUDDHA'S CONCEPTIONS OF REALITY AND MORALITY"
- (2) Chih-i is the founder of Chinese T'ien-t'ai Buddhist Denomination
- (3) T.33. 681-815 means, T for The Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo (The Tripitaka in Chinese) edited by. Takakusu & Watanabe Reprinted 1962 published by The Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kankokai, Tokyo. T33=volume 33 of The Tripitaka. The following number are the page No.
- (4) 1c-2a; The Chinese Taisho Tripitaka has three columns in a page which is divided into a, b, c from the top
- (5) Part III of the Bhāvanākrama by Kamalāśīla, and this is the English translation from Sanskrit Manuscript edited by G. Tucci 1971, Rome. Chapter 5. Thesis of the Iva śaṅ is quoted in the History of Buddhism by Bu-ston
- (6) Abe Masao; "Man and Nature in Christianity and Buddhism" p.149 inserted in the Buddha Eye, an anthology of the Kyoto School edited by Frederick Franck, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 1982 Chapter 3 of the Shobogenzo, Buddha Nature, by Dogen, Dogen jyo(A) Nihonshisotaikei, Yuwanami 1970, p.45