

My Report of the Panel on “Critical Buddhism”

Shiro Matsumoto

This is my personal report of the panel on “Critical Buddhism” (*Hihan Bukkyō*), in the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), in Washington D. C., November 22, 1993.

The aim of the panel and the names of the panelists can be seen from the following “Panel Proposal”.

PANEL PROPOSAL ON “CRITICAL BUDDHISM (*Hihan Bukkyō*): ISSUES AND RESPONSES TO A NEW METHODOLOGICAL MOVEMENT”

One of the most interesting and important recent developments in Buddhist studies is known as “Critical Buddhism” (*hihan bukkuyō*), which has raised serious questions about a wide range of basic East Asian Buddhist notions, from original enlightenment (*hongaku*) and *tathā-gatagarbha* (*nyoraizō*) thought through issues concerning Chinese naturalism and Buddhist-Shinto amalgamations to the Kyoto school’s view of absolute nothingness and postwar social and ethical issues. This methodological movement began to develop with a series of books first published in 1989 and 1990 primarily among scholars in the Buddhist Studies Department of Komazawa University in Tokyo who were interested in coming to a clear understanding of the contemporary implications of karmic causality in order to evaluate the relevance of Buddhist thought for a variety of social issues. They have tried to

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reexamine most of the major developments in East Asian Buddhism from classical to modern times in terms of their consistency with the fundamental Buddhist philosophy of causality expressed in Pali and early Mahayana Buddhism. While "Critical Buddhism" is sometimes known for its bold claims that "*tathāgatagarbha* thought is not Buddhism," or that "Zen is not Buddhism," its real significance lies in challenging substantialist assumptions which affect Buddhist doctrines and social applications.

The aim of this panel, which may be the first panel on the topic in a national conference in America, is to present and reflect on the various implications of Critical Buddhism for understanding the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, the development of medieval Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, and the role of Buddhism in modern Asian society. The panelists include:

Presiding: SALLIE KING, James Madison University

First Paper: JAMIE HUBBARD, Smith College

Second Paper: NOBUYOSHI YAMABE, Yale University

Third Paper: STEVEN HEINE, Penn State

Fourth Paper: DAN LUSTHAUS, Bates College

First Respondant: PAUL SWANSON, Nanzan Institute

Second Respondant: SHIRÔ MATSUMOTO, KOMAZAWA UNIVERSITY

The titles of the papers by the panelists were the following.

1. "Critical Buddhism: A Critical Appraisal" (J. Hubbard)
2. "The Critique of "Dhātu-vāda" in the Critical Buddhism Movement" (N. Yamabe)
3. "Returning to the Sources: Critical Buddhism" (D. Lusthaus)
4. "Critical Buddhism and the Debate Concerning the 75-Fascicle and 12-Fascicle Shôbôgenzô Texts" (S. Heine)

This panel was of special importance for me, because the assertions of Prof. Hakamaya and of myself, called "Critical Buddhism" in the panel, were taken up as theme and argued openly for the first time at an academic conference of Buddhist studies. In fact, it really was an exciting experience for me to have participated in the panel. I stated "My View on Critical Buddhism," and answered to Mr. Yamabe's critique. Moreover, at the following panel, which dealt with "Original enlightenment thought," I was given a chance to answer the questions about "Critical Buddhism" by Prof. Nagatomi, a commentor of the panel.

Anyway, I was surprised at the fairness of American Buddhist scholars. I admire it. I hope that the situation will be improved in Japan also. I would like to express my deepest thanks to Professors Paul Swanson and Steven Heine, who kindly invited me to the panel. As a personal report, I will record what I stated at the panel, in the following.

My View on Critical Buddhism

S. Matsumoto 1993, 11, 22 (AAR)

I am very pleased to be able to participate in this panel. My present view on Critical Buddhism is the following. Critical Buddhism must be critical towards Critical Buddhism itself, otherwise it will be another kind of Traditional Buddhism. Therefore, I think, we must be critical towards the teachings of Dogen, and of Indian and Tibetan Mādhyamika philosophers, and even of the Buddha himself. I think, it is very probable that their thoughts were, on some points, influenced by dhātu-vāda. So we should not worship them in advance, but try to understand their thoughts accurately and critically.

For example, I think, at present, it cannot be stated that Dogen

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criticised original enlightenment thought or tathāgatagarbha thought in his *Bendōwa*, because his own position there, which is well expressed by the word *shinjin-ichinyo* (identity of body and soul), is to be regarded as one type, the extreme type, of tathāgatagarbha thought. Moreover, even in the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, I think, Dogen was not entirely free from the way of thinking based on tathāgatagarbha thought.

Secondly, in Mādhyamika philosophy, the word “tattva” (thatness), stated in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, XVIII-9, had been considered by all the Mādhyamika philosophers since Bhāviveka to denote the highest reality cognized by nonconceptual cognition (*nirvikalpajñāna*). However, this interpretation of “tattva” based on the notion of nonconceptual cognition is, I think, clearly influenced by the dhātu-vāda tradition, especially that of the Yogācāras.

Thirdly, in the so-called earliest Buddhist texts preserved in Pali, such as the *Suttanipāta*, there exist many clear statements admitting the existence of *ātman*. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the Buddha practiced *dhyāna* even after he had attained enlightenment. However, the *dhyāna* theory seems to have been the main cause to produce the non-Buddhistic notion of nonconceptual cognition. So, we must be very careful when we try to make clear the true import of his teaching.

Finally, this is my personal request. I am very pleased if you have time to read my new book, *A Critical Study of Zen Thought* (『禅思想の批判的研究』)。

Two types of tathāgatagarbha thought

- 1) 仏性内在論 = the theory of immanence of buddha-nature
the original type “buddha-nature is in one’s body”
- 2) 仏性顕在論 = the theory of manifestation of buddha-nature
the extreme type “buddha-nature is already manifested on the phenomenal existences, such as trees and stones”

My Reply to Mr. Yamabe's paper

I think Mr. Yamabe's paper today is very important, and full of valuable information and interpretations. It is especially important to me because he criticized theoretically my hypothesis of "dhātu-vāda." This kind of theoretical critique of the hypothesis will always be wellcomed. But I cannot accept his interpretations and conclusions. So I am going to state my opinion of his critique.

First of all, I must thank Mr. Yamabe for sending me a copy of his today's paper, a week ago. So I could have a little time to think about it. Mr. Yamabe's conclusion is expressed on page 18 of his paper. He says there as follows:

The Yogācāra theory of *gotra* is indeed discriminatory, but it is not based on monism. Tathāgatagarbha thought is certainly monistic, but the *gotra* distinction does not seem to have essential significance. Some texts, such as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti*, show an apparent *dhātvāda* structure. That structure, however, seems to be an inconsistency caused by the reinterpretation of the *gotra* theory.

But I cannot accept this conclusion, because, I think, the Yogācāra theory of "gotra" is based on monism, and, in Tathāgatagarbha thought, the *gotra* distinction seems to have essential significance, and the "dhātvāda" structure of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is completely consistent. In order to make clear my opinion, I would like to deal with the definition of "gotra" in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, shown by Yamabe on page 4.

But before discussing the definition, I have doubt about the intention or the attitude of his critique of my hypothesis. I cannot understand why he has not touched the arguments in the two articles of mine,

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that is, “On the One-vehicle (*ekayāna*) Theory of the Vijñānavādins”¹⁾ and “On the One-vehicle Theory of the *Śrīmālāsūtra*,”²⁾ because my framing of the hypothesis of “*dhātuvāda*” is mainly based on these two articles. Moreover, the former one, “On the One-vehicle Theory of the Vijñānavādins” is of special importance in relation to Mr. Yamabe’s paper today, because the arguments in the article are focused on the important passage of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*, commenting on *Kārikā*, XI, 53, which seems to make clear the meaning of the term “*dharmadhātu*” for the Yogācāras. That passage is “because the *dharmadhātu* of the *śrāvaka* etc. is undifferentiated” (*śrāvakādīnāṃ dharmadhātor abhinnatvāt*). And, this passage, I think, clearly shows the uniqueness of “*dhātu*” for the Yogācāras. I would like to know Yamabe’s interpretation of the passage.

Now, I am going to investigate the definition of “*gotra*” in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*,³⁾ on page 4 in Yamabe’s paper. His understanding of the definition, which is clearly based on the interpretation by the other scholars, including Prof. Hakamaya,⁴⁾ that the words “*gotra*” “*bīja*” “*dhātu*” “*prakṛti*” in the passage of the definition are all synonymous. But, is this interpretation really right? Here, please refer to note 8 on page 4 of Yamabe’s paper.⁵⁾ The important sentence is “*tat punar gotraṃ bījam ity apy ucyate dhātuḥ prakṛtir ity api.*” This, Mr. Yamabe translates as “Further, this *gotra* is also called seed (*bīja*), *dhātu*, and origin (*prakṛti*).” This translation seems right.⁶⁾ But I don’t think it the only possible translation, because it seems that this sentence can be translated like “But that *gotra* is also called *bīja*, and the *dhātu* is also called *prakṛti*.” Here we cannot ignore the fact that the sentence was translated in Tibetan translation as “*rigs de ni sa bon shes kyañ bya, khams de ni rañ bshin shes kyañ byaḥo.*”⁷⁾ And this translation is clearly identical with my new translation. Of course, there are passages by Sthiramati, stating that the words “*gotra*” “*bīja*” “*dhātu*” are synonymous, as is shown in note 15,⁸⁾ on

pages from 6 to 7, and indicating that the words "*gotra*" and "*prakṛti*" are synonymous. But this is just the interpretation by Sthiramati.⁹⁾ I think the Tibetan translation of the sentence mentioned above indicates that there is a slight possibility of difference between the two group of words. In other words, the possibility that "*dhātu*" and "*prakṛti*" are considered to be different from "*gotra*" cannot be denied.

This interpretation of mine can be supported by the word "*prakṛti-sthaṃ gotram*" in the definition of "*gotra*" above mentioned. Mr. Yamabe translates the word as "existing by nature," as all the other scholars do, based on the Tibetan translation of the word, i. e. "*rañ bshin gyis gnas pa*."¹⁰⁾ But I consider this translation to be incorrect, because the word means "the *gotra* located on *prakṛti*" or "the *gotra* existing on *prakṛti*." And I think that this "*prakṛti*" is the unique locus or "*dhātu*" of manifold *gotras*. So this *gotra* theory has the structure of "dhātu-vāda." I must admit this interpretation of mine is totally new. But I think I am not wrong. The "*prakṛti*" seems to be equated by the author of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* with the term "*dharmatā*" in the word "*dharmatā-pratilabdha*"¹¹⁾ ("acquired by *dharmatā*"). And this equation is admitted by the passage of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti*, shown in note 39 on page 17 of Yamabe's paper.¹²⁾

Therefore, I think, the *gotras* of *śrāvaka* etc. are located on the single locus, which is called "*prakṛti*" in the definition. So the system of the Yogācāras is nothing other than "dhātuvāda." And, in this connection, I will state a new interpretation of the word "*ālambanapratyaya*" in the Yogācāra literatures, mentioned by Yamabe on page 10. He translates the word as "cognitive object," and criticized my interpretation of "dhatuvāda" as "generative monism." But "*ālambanapratyaya*" in the case does not simply mean "cognitive object,"¹³⁾ but means "the cause as locus." In other words, the "*ālambana*" there means "locus" or "basis." This interpretation of mine can be supported by the word "*tadālambanaprabhava*" in the *Madhyāntavibhāṅgabhāṣya*, pp.23-24 of

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Nagao’s edition. There Vasubandhu says that the *dharmas* of āryas are produced from “that locus” (*tadālabhāna*), which is no other than the “dharmadhātu.”¹⁴⁾ Thus, it is clear that the Yogācāra system has the structure of “dhātuvāda.”

Although I admit Mr. Yamabe’s contribution to the elucidation of the “*nānādhātu*” theory, or the theory of different *dhātus*, of the Yogācāras, I think this theory does not contradict with the “dhātuvāda” structure, because the “*dhātus*” in the passages explaining the “*nānādhātu*” theory is to be regarded as the “*gotras*,” which are located on the single locus, which I call “*dhātu*.”

Concerning Tathāgatagarbha thought, I have no time here to state my opinion of Mr. Yamabe’s interpretations. But, I would like to ask Mr. Yamabe to reflect on the passage of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, shown on page 13 of Yamabe’s paper. According to his translation, it is stated there as follows: “Eventually the rays of the sun’s disk of the Tathāgāta fall onto even the bodies of the sentient beings who are fixed in the evil state (*mithyātvaniyatasamṭāna*).”¹⁵⁾ But does this statement really deny the notion of the existence of the sentient beings who are fixed in evil state? I don’t think so. If one says that everyone, or every caste of people, breathes the air, does the statement show the notion of equality, or of discrimination?

I admit that my reply to Mr. Yamabe is incomplete, but I must stop now. Thank you for your attention.

注

- 1) 「唯識派の一乗思想について」『駒沢大学仏教学部論集』第13号, 1982年。
- 2) 「『勝鬘經』の一乗思想について」『駒沢大学仏教学部研究紀要』第41号, 1983年 (『縁起と空』1989年, 第七章)
- 3) Wogihara ed., p. 3, ll. 1-8.
- 4) Cf. 『批判仏教』p. 261, ll. 14-15.
- 5) There Yamabe shows the text of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Wogihara ed.,

p. 3, II. 1-8).

- 6) Japanese translation by Hakamaya is the same in meaning as that by Yamabe. Cf. 『批判仏教』 p. 261, II. 14-15.
- 7) Derge ed., Wi, 2b5.
- 8) In the note, Yamabe presents the text of the *Sūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya* (Peking ed., Mi, 46a6-b4), and translates it into English.
- 9) I understand at present that This statement of mine was incorrect, because Hakamaya has already pointed that there is a passage, indicating that the words in question are synonymous, in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, i. e., “bījaparyāyāḥ punar dhātur gotraṃ prakṛtir hetuḥ...paryāyā veditavyāḥ” (Bhattacharya ed., p. 26, II. 18-19) Cf. Hakamaya 『批判仏教』 p. 261, I. 6.
- 10) Derge ed., Wi, 2b3.
- 11) Cf. “tatra prakṛtisthaṃ gotraṃ yad bodhisattvānāṃ ṣaḍāyatanaviśeṣaḥ. sa tādrśaḥ paraṃparāgato ’nādikāliko dharmatāpratilabdhaḥ” (Wogihara ed., p. 3, II. 2-4).
- 12) In the note, Yamabe translates a passage from the *Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti* of Āryavimuktisena. The translated text is “taiḥ prakṛtisthagotre prakṛtyabhidhānasyārtho vācyāḥ. kāraṇaparyāyaś cet tad api pratyayasamudānītam iti kim arthaviśeṣaḥ. dharmatāparyāye punar eṣa doṣo nāsti. prajñaptikaṃ vā teṣāṃ gotraṃ, idaṃ tu lākṣaṇikaṃ. ato na tenādaḥ saṃgacchate.” (Pensa ed., p. 76, I. 25-p. 77, I. 4).
- 13) Yamabe says on page 10 as follows: “*Tathatā* is synonymous with *dharmadhātu*, which, according to Hakamaya and Matsumoto, gives rise to all the mundane and supramundane elements. It should be noted, however, that the role of *tathatā* in a soteriological context of the Yogācāra system is rather limited. If it is sometimes called the cause of holy *dharmas* (namely supramundane wisdom), it is because *tathatā* helps the arising of supramundane wisdom by becoming its cognitive object or *ālambanapratyaya*.”
But it should be noted that “*tathatā*” is called “locus” (gshi) in the *Jñānālokālaṅkārasūtra* (P. ed., Kha, 321b8). Cf. 『縁起と空』 p. 316.
- 14) Cf. My article 「唯識派の一乗思想について」 p. 307.
- 15) Johnston ed., p. 36, II. 16-17.

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