The Three Modes of Encompassing in the Vijñāptimātratā System :

Their Correlated Meaning in the Structural
Totality of the Human Consciousness

Minoru Kiyota

Philosophizing is a process of reawakening ourselves to our own authentic human situation. In this process Western existentialism is extremely critical against a fixed system of philosophy for inasfar as the existential nature of man is concerned it must be grasped in a state of flux. Jaspers therefore states that "A philosophy of system is, as a man, like someone who builds a castle, but lives next door in a shanty."⁽¹⁾ In Buddhism the same idea may be expressed as follows : A man who seeks knowledge only for the sake of knowledge is he who ultimately leaves life without knowing his own self. Here we see that both Western existentialists and the Buddhists come face to face with a common problem. But this does not mean that Western philosophy and Buddhist philosophy run in the same stream. They are rooted and have been nurtured in a different cultural tradition and climate. It merely means that out of the struggle between the rational and the irrational in the west emerged the problem of human existentialism, but that this very issue has been the problem of the fundamental concern of the Buddhists throughout centuries.

What the Buddhists aim at is mokṣa, the liberation from the fundamental sufferings of mankind, and seek for a nirvāṇa, which let us simple understand here as a transcendental realm. As such it is an irrational realm. But it is not mere-irrationality transcending the rational, but a realm to be realized after having exhausted all human efforts of rationalizing and having reawakened to the authentic human situation. Thus inasfar as

---

(1) Jaspers, K., Reason and Existenz, London, 1956. p. 26.

it is concerned with the human situation, it is a realm involved in the reality of present existence, but inasfar as it is concerned with the reawakening of man by exhausting the rational, it deals with the trans-rational realm. This paper therefore aims to describe how the contact between the rational and the trans-rational is brought about in the Vijñāptimātratā system of Buddhism.

The original position of Buddhism was that that which is cognized is devoid of a permanent character, from which premise it can be drawn that that which cognizes is therefore also devoid of a permanent character because the two are the corresponding elements which make cognition possible. The term mere-ideation, the central conception of the Vijñāptimātratā system, then means that all things are of the mind (*manomaya*) and from the mind (*manoñña*), and hence, 'only the mind becomes.' Thus the term mere-ideation is to be grasped not in a fixed state but in a flowing one in which one's very awareness of being is constantly in a flux. But in the analysis of the mind, it is said that in the root of the *vijñāna*s is the *ālaya* which stimulates the forces of clinging; hence, the *ālaya* is the ultimate depth in the final analysis with reference to the human consciousness. Therefore, In spite of the state of constant flux that the term mere-ideation implies, we find in that very term an element which essentially negates the original position and acknowledges a theory of fixation in the fundamental make-up of the mind.

The Vijñāptimātratā system acknowledges these two opposing realms of thought and regards the former as representing the realm of *tattva* or true nature and the latter as representing that of *vikalpa* or discriminating nature. The problem now is describing in concrete terms how these two opposing realms are related with one another, because if principle is devoid of contact with manifested reality, it has no validity what-so-ever inasfar as human existence is concerned. In this quest, however, the Vijñāptimātratā system cuts into and through the level of the empirical self, analyzes the categories of the *vijñāna*, and touches upon the *ālaya-vijñāna*. What then is the *ālaya*? The *She-tai-cheng-lun* 攝大乘論, the Chinese trans-

lation of the Mahāyāna-samparigraha-śāstra, refers to it as the the 'basic vijñāna,' while its Commentary 攝大乘論釋 describes it as the 'basic substance which discriminates.' But is it possible for the ālaya-vijñāna which discriminates to transform itself to prajñā-wisdom whose quality is one of non-discrimination? This is essentially what we mean when we speak of the contact between true and discriminating natures.

The Vijñāptimātratā system analyzes the nature of things conceived by the human consciousness into three realms as follows:

(1) Parikalpita-svabhāva or that which is devoid of on original substance like the infinitely divisible form which exists only in one's imagination; hence, that which is of non-real existence.

(2) Paratantra-svabhāva or that which is devoid of a permanent substance but is the product of dependent causation; hence, that which is of temporary existence.

(3) Parinispāna-svabhāva or the ultimate reality, the authentic situation of being, or let us say, the transfinite which is not a process to but an object inherent in the substance of the human consciousness.

Hence it is said:

"Ālaya-vijñāna is paratantra-svabhāva. All vijñānas preceding it are parikalpita-svabhāva."⁽²⁾

But discriminating nature and paratantra-svabhāva are opposite qualities: the former is autonomical so to speak, while the latter is heteronomical. How can opposite qualities be identified as one. To this the She-tai-cheng-lun states as follows:

".....because it (the substance of discrimination) arises according to the conditions of its own perfuming seed (vasana-bijā), it is dependent on conditions and hence can not self-exist. If it comes into being, it is possessed of a quality which disintegrates at an instant and is never in control of itself. Therefore it is referred to as paratantra-svabhāva."⁽³⁾

While the 21st verse of the Triṃśikā states as follows:

"paratantrasvabhāvas tu vikalpa pratyayodbhavaḥ."

(2) Taishō 31, p. 163c.

(3) Taishō 31, p. 186b.

In the above two passages, discrimination and paratantraīsvabhāva are accepted without question as that which are dependently formed. In other words, whether one sees a contradiction between discrimination and paratantra-svabhāva or not depends on whether one sees paratantra-svabhāva as an antithesis of discrimination or its very substance.

That paratantra-svabhāva involves the element of dependent causation and thereby becomes at the same time the substance of discrimination essentially means that it is grasped in the reality of human existence. Or putting it another way, it means that although individuality is dissolved in the stream of dependent causation, it is this very stream that becomes the substance of individual existence. This thought is aptly expressed in the *She-tai-cheng-lun* as 'self-existence can not be had,' i. e. the substance of self can not exist independently, or 'there is no self-abode.'

Now we might be able to realize in more concrete term what the expression 'only the mind becomes' implies. If we were to seek for the source which produces clinging or discrimination which is reflected through the instruments of the various vijñānas, we must dig in beyond the surface of the empirical self, into the level of the ālaya. But if the ālaya is not a permanent abode but whose character is determined by its perfuming seed, which in turn is dependently caused, these vijñānas must be of a kind that are quite different from that which are rooted in a fundamentally independent body source of clinging. On the other hand, if the ālaya is devoid of individuality, the manas loses its own basis in asserting its individuality. Hence, the vijñānas should not be considered the instruments of clinging rooted in the ālaya but codependently existing with the ālaya. That the ālaya is the source of discrimination then means that the substance of discrimination is dependently caused. Thus discrimination and paratantra-svabhāva are not substantially opposite qualities. It can now be concluded that discrimination and paratantra-svabhāva are, in the final analysis, involved in one another. The theory that the character of discrimination is involved in paratantra-svabhāva casts light to our understanding of the essential nature of conditional causation. Moreover, only in

the content of the ālaya-vijñāna as a basic discriminating body, can the essence of conditional causation be realized in concrete form. Various modes of existence therefore are nothing more than the becomings of the vijñānas following the law of conditional causation. Thus the Commentary states :

“All elements of existence are produced by conditional causation due to the nature of mere-ideation.”⁽⁴⁾

Dharmapala, however, identified two processes of causation inherent in paratantra-svabhāva, viz. contamination and purification. The process of causation by discrimination is referred to as contamination, and that by non-discrimination as purification. Thus underlying the two functions of cognition (i. e. that which cognizes 見分, and that which is cognized 相分) of the realm of paratantra-svabhāva are to be found the realms of parikalpita-svabhāva and parinipanna-svabhāva. That is to say, taking the empirical cognition-subject as a point of reference, we find, first of all, the cognition-object of the realm of parikalpita-svabhāva, but as this cognition subject gradually ascends, so to speak, and becomes ‘purified,’ we see the cognition-object itself simultaneously evolving to the realm of parinipanna-svabhāva. That Dharmapala conceived of such a process is not clearly indicated in his works, but the fact that he had conceived of the element of conditional causation inherent in parikalpita-svabhāva in speaking of the two cognition functions and the fact that he had distinguished two processes of causation within the realm of paratantra-svabhāva seems to imply so. If so, does such an explanation have any validity in elucidating the existential nature of man ?

Because paratantra-svabhāva refers to the realm which is produced by various cause-making conditions, it must be acknowledged that illusions are not in themselves paratantra-svabhāva, but that which establishes them as such is due to paratantra-svabhāva. From this it follows that because all things are conditionally caused, there can be no modes of being existing

---

(4) Taishō 31, p. 399b.

(24) The Three Modes of in the Vijñāptimātratā System (M. Kiyota)

independently. Thus the realm which discriminates the two cognition functions is parikalpita-svabhāva and that which is freed of discrimination is parinispāna-svabhāva. This means then that the three modes of existential nature point to the same substance. What is different is not the substance but the positions from which it is pointed. If we were to conceive the three modes of being as independent realms we can not come to understand the underlying relation between parikalpita-svabhāva and paratantra-svabhāva, nor can we be able to explain the development of the dimensions of our encompassing from parikalpita-svabhāva to parinispāna-svabhāva in the structural totality of the human consciousness. Thus as the Mādhyamika system elucidated the fact that that which is conditionally caused should not be understood in the opposites so likewise does the Vijñāptimātratā system elucidate the fact that 'only the mind becomes' through the understanding of the principle of conditional causation as the basic substance of being. It is upon the background of such philosophical traditions that the later Mahāyāna Schools developed the theory that mortality and enlightenment are involved in one another.

GADJIN M. NAGAO
INDEX
TO THE
MAHĀYĀNA-SŪTRĀLAMKĀRA
(SYLVAIN LÉVI EDITION)
PART TWO
TIBETAN-SANSKRIT & CHINESE-SANSKRIT
NIPPON GAKUJUTSU SHINKŌ-KAI
TOKYO 1961
B5 p.254 ¥1,300