The Dharma Breeze

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Two Definitions of Buddhism

Nobuo Haneda

Introduction

As the first topic of this essay, I want to discuss two definitions of Buddhism. The first definition is that Buddhism is a teaching or doctrine that we should study objectively; the second is that Buddhism is a teaching that we should experience subjectively in our own lives. Then, I will present a couple of illustrations that show the difference between the two definitions and emphasize the importance of the latter.

Two Definitions of Buddhism

The Japanese word *bukkyo* is usually translated as "Buddhism." This word consists of the two Chinese characters, *butsu* (buddha [awakened one]) and *kyo* (teaching). On the basis of this word we can talk about the following two definitions of Buddhism:

1. *Teaching* [taught by] the *Buddha*
2. *Teaching* [for us to become] *buddha*s

In the first definition, Buddhism is a teaching that was taught by a historical person by the name of [Shakyamuni] Buddha. Here the word "Buddha" is a proper noun. In the second definition, Buddhism is a teaching that enables us to become buddhas. Here the word "buddha" is a common noun.

What, then, are we supposed to do about these two types of Buddhism? In the first Buddhism, we are supposed to know the teaching that was taught by the Buddha. Here the teaching is an object of our intellectual or academic pursuit. In the second Buddhism, we are supposed to appreciate Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching within the context of our own lives and to eventually become a buddha, an awakened one, just like Shakyamuni.

Thus the first Buddhism means an objective and academic way of appreciating the Buddha's teaching, and the second Buddhism means a subjective and experiential way of appreciating his teaching.

What, then, is the relationship between these two Buddhisms? I believe that the first Buddhism is a preparatory stage for the second Buddhism. The ultimate goal of Buddhism does not exist in the first Buddhism, in mere intellectual appreciation of a doctrine, or ideas and concepts; it exists in the second Buddhism—in our becoming buddhas.

We can compare the first Buddhism to collecting recipes and the second Buddhism to actual cooking and eating. Or, we could compare the first Buddhism to learning about love by reading romantic novels and the second Buddhism to actually loving someone.

It is perfectly all right for us to pursue the first Buddhism as much as we want if we do not forget that our goal is in the second Buddhism. The first Buddhism should be a servant to its master, the second Buddhism. It should never claim to be a master. But unfortunately, many Buddhists, in my opinion, see a goal in the first Buddhism. They remain in the first Buddhism and do not advance to the second Buddhism. They mistakenly think that learning about a doctrine, or ideas and concepts, is good enough. They are mistaking recipe collection for actual cooking and eating, or reading about love for actual loving.

Those who are satisfied with only the first Buddhism, with mere accumulation of knowledge, are not true Buddhists. They do not know that Buddhism is nothing but a teaching of self-examination. They do not realize that their self must be examined by the Buddha's teaching—that it must be doubted, challenged, and negated by it.

The true Buddhist initially studies the first Buddhism and he uses the knowledge acquired in it for examining the self. Then the teaching challenges him, and he comes to recognize the emptiness of the self and the reality of the Dharma. When he has this deep realization, he is said to have become a buddha, an awakened one.

I have discussed the two types of Buddhism. Next, I want to present a couple of illustrations that show the difference between the two types of Buddhism, and emphasize the importance of pursuing the second Buddhism, a subjective and experiential appreciation of a teaching.

Two Ways of Understanding "the Knowledge of Ignorance"

Shuichi Maida, (1906-67, a modern Japanese Buddhist thinker) discusses the difference between two (i.e., objective and subjective) ways of understanding "the knowledge of ignorance," a teaching by Nicholaus Cusanus (1400-64, a German mystic philosopher). Maida says,

> Nicholaus Cusanus talked about "knowledge of ignorance" [*docta ignorantia*]. Having listened to an academic explanation, some may say, "Well, that is knowledge of ignorance. Now I understand what knowledge of ignorance is." And they will remember the explanation. But that is getting wiser by acquiring information. When we consider the real meaning of knowledge of ignorance, such an understanding is rather strange. Listening to lectures holds this kind of danger. If we truly understand "knowledge of ignorance," we cannot be boastful of our knowledge. We cannot help but bow our heads and lose our intellectual pride. "Knowledge of ignorance"—a deep realization that we are ignorant persons—should make us truly humble. It simpl
> y means bowing before the fact of our ignorance and stopping there. If we go further and think that we have *knowledge* of "knowledge of ignorance," that is not "knowledge of ignorance" at all. (Shuichi Maida, *The Evil Person*, p. 21)

Here Maida says that objectively learning about ignorance is one thing; it is quite another to subjectively understand it. There is a tremendous difference between the two. When we subjectively understand it, we are humbled and become ignorant persons.

Two Ways of Understanding the Truth of Impermanence

One of the most important teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha is the truth of impermanence. Shakyamuni said, "Everything is impermanent." Concerning this statement, too, we can talk about the two (i.e., objective and subjective) ways of understanding.

When many people hear Shakyamuni's words "Everything is impermanent," they understand this truth objectively and generally. They think that all things outside them, things such as people, animals, and plants, are impermanent—that they are constantly moving, changing, and flowing. But they do not know the truth of impermanence within the context of the self. If knowing the objective truth about things outside the self is Buddhism, then we must call scientists "Buddhists" because they all know that all things are impermanent—that all things are in a state of flux. But scientists do not necessarily know that everything in the self is impermanent. Thus we cannot call them Buddhists.

Buddhism, however, is a teaching of self-examination. It is a teaching in which we must see the truth of impermanence within the context of the self. Actually, the only crucial place the truth should be seen is in the self. The true Buddhist is a person who discovers impermanence in the self.

When Shakyamuni discussed the truth of impermanence, he was talking about it as the truth that he discovered within the context of the self. When he said, "Everything is impermanent," he was saying, "Everything *in me* is impermanent." He was not talking about impermanence as an objective or general truth. He was talking about it as the truth he discovered in the self.

This point becomes even clearer when we consider another statement by Shakyamuni concerning impermanence. He said, "Form is impermanent. Sensation, conception, impulse, and consciousness are impermanent." In this statement, the word "form" referred to *his* body, and the words "sensation, conception, impulse, and consciousness" referred to the four components of *his* mind. Thus, he was saying that everything *in him*, i.e., both *his* body and *his* mind, was impermanent.

When Shakyamuni discovered the truth of impermanence in the self, he experienced negation of the selfhood that he thought he had. This truth challenged and negated the selfhood to which he was attached. Thus, we can say that subjective understanding of impermanence humbled Shakyamuni. It made him see his ignorance and deludedness. It made him see the futility of his attachment to all ideas, thoughts, and viewpoints.

Conclusion

Rev. Shizuka Miyagi (1931-2008, a Japanese Shin teacher) talks about two types of spiritual growth. One is spiritual growth in which a man experiences spiritual growth while maintaining his old self; the other is spiritual growth in which a man experiences his total transformation—in which his old self dies and a new self is born.

To show the difference between the two types of spiritual growth, Rev. Miyagi compares the first type to a snake's shedding of its skin and the second type to a cicada's shedding of its shell. Then, he explains that in a snake's shedding of its skin, the only thing that changes is the exterior of the animal; its main body stays the same. But when a cicada sheds its shell, it goes through a total transformation; the insect that has been crawling on the ground now suddenly starts to fly into the air.

We can use this illustration of Rev. Miyagi's for our discussion of the two (objective and subjective) types of Buddhism. The first Buddhism is like a snake's shedding of its skin. Here one maintains the same old self as the basis of learning. Although one's self gets more and more learned in this type of learning, there is no fundamental change in it. But, in the second Buddhism, one's self is challenged and negated. The old self dies and a new self is born.

In addition to the two concepts, ignorance and impermanence, that we have discussed, we can say the same thing about other Buddhist concepts, such as emptiness, nirvana, and conditional arising. Understanding those concepts objectively as referring to things outside us is not the right way of understanding them. Actually the only crucial place those concepts must be seen is in the self. It is only when we understand them within the context of the self that we are said to be truly studying Buddhism. If they are seen in the self, we will certainly be humbled. We will not be able to maintain our attachment to our ideas, opinions, and assertions. But, at the same time, we will be born in a wonderful realm where we enjoy spiritual liberation.

How Our Teachers Read Buddhist Scriptures

Nobuo Haneda

Introduction

In this essay I want to talk about how our teachers read Buddhist scriptures. In our study of Buddhism, we often read Buddhist texts. When we read them, it is important to know that there are two ways of doing it. The first is a general and objective way, and the second is a subjective and experiential way.

In the initial stage of studying Buddhism, we usually read scriptures in the first way, in a general and objective way. We try to learn about ideas and concepts. Our main interest is in gaining academic or factual information. In this initial stage, we do not read texts for the sake of examining the self.

But as we advance on the Buddhist path, we realize that the goal of Buddhism is self-examination or knowing the self, not mere accumulation of information and knowledge. Then, we start to read texts for the sake of self-examination. We start to read texts not merely to gain information but also to understand the self.

We have had many wonderful Buddhist teachers down through history. All of our teachers read Buddhist texts not only in the first way, but also in the second way. They taught us the importance of reading texts in the second way.

Since our Buddhist teachers read Buddhist texts subjectively for the sake of self-examination, they sometimes did not read them in the so-called objective and standard way. When traditional scholars saw our Buddhist teachers' unique and unorthodox way of reading texts, they criticized them, saying that they were reading texts in arbitrary ways. Were those scholars justified in their criticism of our teachers? I believe that the answer to this question is yes and no.

First, let me explain why I say yes. If there is a "right" way—a fixed, objective, and standard way—of reading Buddhist texts, we must say that the scholars are justified in their criticism of our teachers. We must say that our teachers are wrong because they do not read texts in the "right" way.

Second, I must say that those scholars are not justified in their criticism of our teachers because our teachers are not dealing with Buddhist texts from a scholarly or objective perspective. They are not interested in understanding a standard meaning of the text. For them Buddhism is nothing but self-examination, and a Buddhist text is a mirror that reflects

and shows the reality of their beings. The text is not a mere source of academic and objective information. In reading it, they are hearing a message about the reality of the self. They are not hearing what the text is generally saying.

Thus the scholars' criticism of our teachers is justified as far as their scholarly position is concerned. But their criticism is not justified because our teachers are not reading texts from a scholarly perspective. Our teachers are not wrong as far as their subjective and experiential position is concerned. Our teachers and their critics are dealing with the same Buddhist text from two totally different perspectives.

Now let me give you examples of the second way of reading Buddhist texts. I want to discuss how three of our teachers, Shan-tao (613-81, a Chinese Pure Land master), Shinran (1173-1262, the founder of Shin Buddhism), and Dr. Iwao Hosokawa (1919-95, a Japanese Shin teacher), read Buddhist texts in their unique ways.

Shan-tao's Reading of "the Nine Grades of People"

First let me discuss how Shan-tao read a section in the *Contemplation Sutra*, one of the three basic texts of the Shin tradition. The *Contemplation Sutra* has a section called "the nine grades of people who are born in the Pure Land." These nine grades of people show the different degrees of human potentials or practical abilities. They are divided into three major categories: high (A), middle (B), and low (C). A is the category of people who are capable of performing excellent practices (such as awakening the aspiration for Buddhahood). B is the category of people who are capable of performing good practices (such as keeping precepts), not excellent but good practices. C is the category of people who commit all kinds of evil actions. These three categories are further divided into three subcategories. Thus, the nine grades are: Aa, Ab, Ac, Ba, Bb, Bc, and Ca, Cb, Cc.

All Chinese commentators on the *Contemplation Sutra* before Shan-tao thought that the nine grades of people showed an ethical path (or ethical stages) in which a practitioner moves upward from a lower stage of C to the higher stages of B and A by improving his abilities and cultivating his virtues.

But Shan-tao, in his commentary on the sutra, did not understand the nine grades the same way. He read the nine grades as showing the reality of himself. He read them as the process of self-examination—as the process of gaining deeper insight into the evil and ignorance of his being. For Shan-tao, the nine grades went the opposite way, that is, from A to B, then from B to C. This means that Shan-tao initially thought he was an excellent person belonging to category A. But, through self-examination, he gradually recognized the depth of his evil and came to see himself as belonging to those in the B and C groups. Eventually, he identified himself with the most evil of persons, those in the Cc grade.

This way, although all commentators of the *Contemplation Sutra* before Shan-tao read the nine grades as an ethical path in which one should move from C to B, then from B to A, Shan-tao read them in a totally opposite way, as a deepening process of self-examination—moving from A to B, then from B to C. Many contemporary Buddhists criticized Shan-tao for doing something arbitrary. But Shan-tao was not interested in learning the so-called traditional or standard interpretation of the text. He was interested in knowing the self that was being shown in the mirror of the text.

Shinran's Reading of the Eighteenth Vow

Here I want to discuss two instances in which Shinran read a Buddhist text in his unique way. First, I want to talk about how Shinran read the Eighteenth Vow (that is mentioned in the *Larger Sutra*, the most important text in Shin Buddhism). The Eighteenth Vow says:

> If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with the sincere mind and the genuine understanding [*shingyo*], aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme Buddhahood. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses [i.e., patricide, matricide, killing an arhat, shedding blood from the Buddha's body, and causing disharmony in the Sangha] and those who slander the True Dharma.
>
> (*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 80, partly modified by N. Haneda)

Here we have two sentences. The first sentence talks about those who attain birth in the Pure Land by saying the Name of Amida (or Amitabha [limitless light]) perhaps even ten times; and the second sentence talks about evil people who are excluded from salvation.

The Pure Land masters before Shinran focused their attention on the first sentence and identified themselves with those who are mentioned in it. They thought that Amida gave them the practice of saying the Name as their only means of salvation. By the practice of saying the Name they could attain birth in the Pure Land after their physical deaths. Understanding the first sentence this way, the Pure Land masters believed that they *were*

capable of performing the practice of saying the Name; and, thanks to this good practice, they could attain birth in the Pure Land after death. Thus they single-mindedly engaged in an exclusive practice of saying the Name as the cause of their salvation.

Since the Pure Land masters thought that Amida would save all people, they did not consider the second sentence as the central teaching of the Eighteenth Vow. They generally considered it Shakyamuni's, not Amida's, words of caution not to commit grave offences. Thus, they often omitted it when they quoted the Eighteenth Vow in their writings.

Shinran, however, did not read the Eighteenth Vow the same way. He never omitted the second sentence when he quoted the Eighteenth Vow. Actually he considered it the most important part of the Vow. He thought that the evil people described in the second sentence showed the basic nature of his being. Thus, he identified himself with them.

Shinran thought that the most important thing in Buddhism was the discovery of the self that was totally unsavable—totally evil and ignorant. He thought that the second sentence showed such a self to him. He believed that the discovery of the totally unsavable self was itself his salvation. He believed that the discovery of the self proved the fact that he was encountering limitless light (i.e., a symbol of limitless wisdom) and was being illuminated by it.

Let me here give an illustration to explain what Shinran means. For example, if I look at the air just in front of me, it looks clean to me. But if bright rays of light suddenly come into my room, I will realize that the air in front of me is not so clean as I have thought. I discover a myriad of fine particles of dust there.

This illustration shows that I am seeing fine particles of dust and rays of light simultaneously. Doesn't the fact that I am seeing a myriad of fine particles of dust prove the fact that there are strong rays of light? How can I see particles of dust without light?

Shinran is talking about the same thing. The fact that Shinran could see the unsavable self—the totally evil and ignorance self—was proof that he was encountering the Buddha's limitless light (or wisdom). Without meeting the limitless light, how could he know that he was absolutely unsavable? How could he have such deep insight into the self? Here he was totally humbled in his self-recognition, and was simultaneously liberated from his self-attachment, from the idea that his self was something wonderful.

Thus Shinran teaches us that the discovery of the absolutely unsavable self (that is described in the second sentence) is the contents of "genuine understanding (*shingyo* that is synonymous with *shinjin*)" which is mentioned in the first sentence. Shinran says that a man experiences "genuine understanding" when he meets a teacher and listens to him saying the Name (i.e., Amitabha [limitless light]). This means that a man attains "genuine understanding" when he encounters the limitless light (or wisdom) that is transmitted to him through his teacher.

Shinran says that "genuine understanding of the self" as totally unsavable is itself one's salvation. Shinran considers that "genuine understanding" is the most important thing in Buddhism; it without fail leads one to the eventual attainment of the supreme Buddhahood, the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

The Pure Land masters before Shinran thought that the practice (of saying the Name) was the cause of salvation, but Shinran claims that saying the Name is not the cause of salvation. Instead, he says that one's experience, here and now, of "genuine understanding" is the cause of salvation. Everything is decided there. He says that one's saying of the Name is not even a practice; it is an expression that naturally comes out of one's mouth as the result of "genuine understanding."

Shinran also teaches us that "birth in the Pure Land" is a symbolic expression for "genuine understanding." It means that one is born in the wonderful spiritual realm of the Buddha's light, of his wisdom. Shinran says that this birth takes place here and now in this life. This view of Shinran is in clear contrast to the view of Pure Land masters before him, who thought that they would attain birth in the Pure Land after their physical deaths.

For Shinran, reading only the first sentence and ignoring the second was a shallow way of reading the Eighteenth Vow. Shinran would say that if people identified themselves only with those mentioned in the first sentence and not with those mentioned in the second sentence, they did not have deep understanding of the self.

Shinran's Reading of "On the Basis of Good Merit (*Eko*)"

Now let me talk about another example of Shinran's unique readings. One section in the *Larger Sutra* is traditionally called "the Fulfillment Statement." Shinran read the section in a totally different way from other Pure Land masters. Without quoting the entire section of the "Fulfillment Statement," I want to explain their differences by extracting one sentence from the section.

One sentence in the section says, "On the basis of good merit, I attain birth in the Pure Land." Concerning the words "good merit" in this sentence, Shinran had a totally different understanding from other Pure Land masters.

Before Shinran, all Pure Land masters read this sentence this way: "On the basis of the good merit *that I have accumulated*, I attain birth in the Pure Land." This was considered the traditional and standard way of reading the sentence. This traditional way of reading means that the practitioner should accumulate good merit through his practice and, on the basis of that merit, he attains birth in the Pure Land.

Shinran, however, did not read the sentence that way. He read the sentence: "On the basis of the good merit *that Amida Buddha has given me*, I attain birth in the Pure Land." For traditional Buddhists before Shinran the "good merit" was something that the practitioner had to accumulate through his practice. But for Shinran, the "good merit" meant that which Amida Buddha had given him—and it was thanks to Amida's merit that Shinran attained birth in the Pure Land.

Since Shinran had deep insight into the evil and ignorant nature of his being (as we have seen in his interpretation of the Eighteenth Vow), he could not say that he was capable of performing a good practice, or capable of accumulating good merit. Thus he could not say, "On the basis of the good merit *that I have accumulated*…" But, being aware of his incompetence in any practice, Shinran realized that Amida was giving wonderful merit to him. He said that the merit that he was receiving from Amida was so wonderful and powerful that it enabled him to attain birth in the Pure Land. Since Amida (i.e., Amitabha) is a symbol for Shinran's historical teachers as well as for limitless wisdom, Shinran is saying here that the merit (i.e., teachings and guidance) that his teachers had given him was so wonderful and powerful that it enabled him to attain birth in the Pure Land, i.e., to attain "genuine understanding."

Now I have discussed two instances in which Shinran read Buddhist texts in his unique way. We can see Shinran's unique reading in many places in his writings. Many Buddhist teachers and scholars have considered Shinran's readings too arbitrary and criticized him. But Shinran was never interested in accumulating general information or knowledge. He was always examining the self. He was always asking, "What is this text teaching me? What aspect of my being is this text showing me?"

Dr. Hosokawa's Reading of "The Story of Three Princes and a Tiger"

Now I want to talk about how Dr. Iwao Hosokawa, a modern Shin teacher, reads a Buddhist story in his unique way. In one of his lectures, Dr. Hosokawa talks about the story of three princes and a tiger. This story goes like this.

Once upon a time, there were three princes. One day they went out for a picnic on a mountain. There they bumped into a mother tiger that was lying on the ground. She was so emaciated that she could not even stand up. And her five cubs surrounded her. When the three princes saw the tiger and cubs, each prince expressed his respective ideas.

First, the oldest prince said, "Good, the tiger is emaciated. Let's kill her. The skin of a tiger is precious. Let's capture these five cubs and sell them." Then, the second oldest prince said, "How sad it is to see a starving tiger! Let's give her our lunch. She will regain her strength and will be able to nurse her babies."

Then, the youngest prince said, "Giving our lunch is not enough. To save her and her cubs, I want to offer my body to her." Having said so, he threw his body to the mother tiger. But she was so weak that she could not eat him. So, with a sword the youngest prince cut his arm, and he offered the bloody arm to her. Then, the tiger licked the blood and ate the arm. When the animal regained her strength, she jumped at the youngest prince and devoured him. The other two princes were terrified and ran away. That's the story.

How do you read this story? I am sure you understand that this story shows three different levels of compassion. I think that is the so-called general and standard way of reading the story.

After telling this story in his lecture, Dr. Hosokawa asks his audience, "How do you read this story? With whom do you identify?" My readers, how do you answer this question? When you read this story that talks about three princes and a tiger, with whom do you identify yourself? Probably we would identify ourselves with the oldest prince or with the second oldest prince. Although we cannot identify ourselves with the youngest prince, we would admire his extraordinary compassion for the tiger.

Then, with whom does Dr. Hosokawa identify himself? After asking himself, "With whom do I identify myself?" Dr. Hosokawa says, "I think that I am the mother tiger who devoured the compassionate prince. I think I am no different from her. I have received so many wonderful things from my teachers, from my friends, and from my parents, but I am

so ungrateful. I am no different from the tiger who devoured the prince without even thanking him."

Dr. Hosokawa reads this story as a text that shows the reality of his self—he reads it as a text that shows that he is an extremely ungrateful person. Here I can see that Dr. Hosokawa is a student of Shinran. He has learned from Shinran that he should read a Buddhist text subjectively to know the reality of his self—as a mirror that shows the reality of his being.

Conclusion

I have discussed how our Buddhist teachers read Buddhist scriptures. Although some people may believe that there is a fixed and standard way of reading Buddhist scriptures, I do not think so. Our Buddhist teachers were not satisfied with reading texts in a general, objective, and standard way. They were not interested in reading texts objectively merely as a source of information.

They read texts for the sole purpose of examining the self. They read them as a mirror that reflected and showed what they were. They were always asking, "What is this text teaching me? What aspect of myself is this text showing me?" They never forgot this subjective position.

We could compare a Buddhist text to a drum. A drum does not have any fixed or standard sound. A drum can give different sounds depending on how we hit it. If we hit a drum softly, we get a soft sound. If we hit it hard, we get a loud sound.

We can say the same thing about a Buddhist text. If we ask a Buddhist text a shallow question, the text will return a shallow answer. If we ask a Buddhist text a deep question, the text will return a deep answer. There is no objective or standard teaching in any Buddhist text. Just as our hitting determines the nature of the sound we get from a drum, the degree of our seriousness or desperation determines the nature of the teaching we receive from a Buddhist text. The more self-reflective we become, the more self-reflective the teaching we receive from a text.

If our subjective and self-reflective positions are established, we can receive a wonderful teaching, not only from books but also from all the things and people in this world. We can learn about our true nature from them.

In the initial stage of Buddhist learning, it is perfectly all right for us to read a text as a source of objective and general information. But as we deepen our understanding of Buddhism, we must know that Buddhism is nothing but a teaching of self-examination. We must read a text subjectively as a mirror that is showing us what we really are. We are so fortunate to have many wonderful teachers, such as Shan-tao and Shinran, and many modern teachers like Dr. Hosokawa, who show us how we should read Buddhist texts.

The Position of 'Objective Logic'

Shuichi Maida

When I tell a person, "Saying something like that is not good," he would likely retort, "Why? You say the same thing, too!" This is called 'objective logic' and many people live their lives on the basis of this position. They are complacent with it and do not doubt it. They think, "I may be petty, but you're petty, too." Having discovered a human being whose pettiness is equal to theirs, they are complacent with their own pettiness.

The person who operates from the position of 'objective logic' is not honoring himself, being complacent with himself. If a person desires to advance on the path of self-examination, he must be shaken by his own pettiness that others have pointed out to him. He must seek to transcend it. He cannot be satisfied with the discovery that others have the same pettiness as himself. Rather, he will be grateful to those who have pointed out his shortcoming, and will meditate on the way to transcend it. That must be the only important issue for him. Then, we can say that he is a person who honors himself.

The subjective position, the one in which self-examination is the only issue, is something very simple. But, people cannot easily take this position. They do not honor themselves, but fall into 'objective logic' instead. They see the same shortcoming in others and criticize them, saying, "I am not the only wrong person. You are wrong, too."

When the other person retorts, "Why? You say the same thing, too," then, I will tell him, "Since I have let you know of your mistake, isn't it enough for you to just reflect on

it?" Then, he will likely answer, "You yourself should reflect on your own mistake. Don't fall into 'objective logic,' and just point out my shortcomings! Why don't you concentrate on your self-reflection?" This way, he is concerned only with attacking me and comparing himself with me. He cannot quietly reflect upon himself. Although he could leave his 'objective logic' in a split second, he cannot do it. Why can't he do it? The only answer I can think of is *because our eyes are positioned in such a way that we are always looking outward*.

Then, the question may arise, "Weren't Shinran Shonin's eyes positioned in the same way?" Yes, they were. Yes, he and we have the same eyes. But there is a world of difference between Shinran and us. If someone were to tell Shinran, "You have this shortcoming," Shinran would likely answer, "Oh, thank you! Thank you for letting me know about it." He would never say, "Well, what about you and all your shortcomings?" Ordinary people, however, are interested only in criticizing those who have pointed out their shortcomings. This is the only difference between Shinran and ordinary people. But this difference becomes a world of difference between Shinran and them. It is the only thing that differentiates a liberated person from an un-liberated person. It is the only thing that determines whether or not we have "genuine understanding (*shin*)" of the self and of the Power beyond the Self.

(*Complete Works of Shuichi Maida*, vol. 6, pp. 611-12; Trans. by N. Haneda)

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Notes:

July 30-August 1, 2010, we held our center's summer retreat at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley. Forty-five people attended it. December 3-5, we held our center's Japanese Buddhist retreat. Eighteen people attended it.

We want to acknowledge the great contributions that the following three individuals are making to the activities of our center: Mr. Steve Kaufman for editing Dr. Haneda's articles for this newsletter from the outset of its publication; Mr. Roy Nakahara for creating CDs and DVDs of our center's lectures and seminars; and Rev. Paul Vielle for recently joining in this newsletter's production team as an editor.

Now a DVD set of "2010 Maida Center Summer Retreat" is available. The retreat topic is "The Bodhisattva Dharmakara's Practice." It is $50 including handling and postage. We sincerely hope you welcome a wonderful new year and have meaningful Dharma-listening throughout the year. (T.H.)