

Kaelin • Körtner • Lin • Liu • Müller • Tsai (eds)

The Conception of the Human Person in Medicine

Exploring Boundaries between Traditional Chinese and Western
Medicine

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Lukas Kaelin • Ulrich H.J. Körtner
Ya-Ping Lin • Michael Shiyung Liu
Sigrid Müller • Yao-Ming Tsai (eds)

Different medical disciplines and approaches perceive the patient in different ways, and behind these respective perceptions lie particular conceptions of the human person. These human images, implicit in medicine, already vary according to medical discipline within so-called Western medicine, and even more so beyond it. This volume explores these diverse conceptions of the human person, in Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, from the perspectives of different disciplines. Philosophers, theologians, medical doctors, anthropologists and historians from Austria and Taiwan contribute to provide a multifaceted picture of the human person in the medical setting.

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Human Life from the Perspective of Buddhist Medicine: A Philosophical Inquiry Based on the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*

Yao-ming Tsai

I. Introduction

This paper focuses on life medicine and life cultivation, in order to discuss how Buddhism cognizes sentient beings or human beings in the life-world, as well as on the elucidation of theories and religious practices relevant to cognition as such. While the textual sources include the Āgama-sūtra and the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* is the primary source here, since it encompasses the most representative scriptures on both the *Path to Liberation* and the *Path to Enlightenment*. Philosophical approaches are employed by way of raising questions, cognizing the life-world, and engaging in doctrinal analysis.

This paper is composed of six sections. The first is an introduction that elucidates the theme and the outline of this paper. The second section focuses on life medicine, primarily employing the Āgama-sūtra in order to expound the manner in which the Buddhist Path to Liberation cognizes sentient beings or human beings. The third section focuses on life medicine using the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra as the primary scripture to elucidate how the Buddhist Path to Enlightenment cognizes sentient beings or human beings. The fourth section focuses on two chapters of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* – “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” and “Contemplating Sentient Beings,” famous for their advanced-level practices of the Bodhisattva – to understand the cognition of sentient beings or human beings concerning issues of life medicine and life cultivation. Based on the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness,” the fifth section unfolds the following four aspects of sentient beings or human beings cognized through consolation: the relationship between the domain of the Bodhisattva and sickness, consolation in relation to the Bodhisattva’s practices, the pacification of the sick in relation to the Bodhisattva’s practices, and the domain of the Bodhisattva in the context of sickness. The sixth section summarizes the main points of this paper.

II. Human Beings as Cognized by the Path to Liberation with the Āgama-sūtra as an Example

The Āgama-sūtra reveals that, even though the Path to Liberation identifies human beings (manuṣya-gati/pathway of human life) as one of the pathways of sentient beings, or as a circle of existence among various sentient beings who enter into the life-world, human beings are not considered to occupy any specific area exclusively; nor do human beings exhibit any idiosyncratic essence.

On the contrary, in terms of daily activities and maintenance of the life journey, human beings interact with all other beings from different realms of the life-world. All activities of human beings in the life-world, whether biological, emotional, cognitive, ethical, cultural, or religious, are produced in the context of interrelated conditions in constant flux. As a result, there is no essence that can be exclusively identified with human beings. Furthermore, all identifiable factors are illusory manifestations that do not contain any substantial, fixed content.

The way the Buddhist Path to Liberation cognizes human beings is not isolated or haphazard. Rather, it results from a viewing construct applicable to various beings in the life-world. Although the objects of teaching on the Buddhist Path to Liberation are mostly human beings, as far as the perceptual approach is concerned, it is not anthropocentric. In other words, human beings are not the only objects of the observation. This perceptual approach employs sets of factors as starting points, including the five component parts in aggregates (skandha/aggregate), the six or twelve sensory gateways (āyatana/sense-base), and the eighteen perception units not unlike the color pigments on a palette (dhātu/perceptual factor), to observe all sorts of life-forms in the life-world without discrimination.¹ In this context, in which all beings are composed of aggregates, come in contact with the life-world around them through sensory gateways, and make up various perceptual manifestations out of related perceptual factors, human beings and all other sentient beings are the same. Thus, the so-called human-specific essence, or the dichotomy of human beings and all other sentient beings, is not at the heart of this construct. Not even the specific level of so-called human beings is the focus of attention. The levels worth observing and scrutinizing are those sets of component parts shared by all sentient beings, which include human beings.

¹ For example, “And what, bhikkhus, is the all? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, the mind and mental phenomena. This is called the all.” Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, vol. II, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000) 1140.

By identifying the component parts into aggregates (skandha), sensory gateways (āyatana), and perceptual factors (dhātu) as the starting units of observation, the Buddhist Path to Liberation stresses the importance of observing how the aggregation and dissipation of these units change the course of the life journey. All human beings and sentient beings alike, regardless of their current stage in life, experience their respective lives as linked together by the segments of birth, aging, sickness, and death. The following are the four crucial understandings of the life journey as such. First of all, the styles and segments of life which human beings experience are roughly the same as those experienced by all other sentient beings in the life-world. Second, regardless of the nature or degree of illness, one does not invariably remain a “patient”; one continues on the journey of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Third, in the context of the medical relationship between physicians and patients, the expertise of the physicians cannot exempt them from the course of going through birth, aging, sickness, and death. Physicians, and those who are currently relatively healthy, are not living in an arena totally different or separate from those who are currently ill. All human beings exist within the same flow of birth, aging, sickness, and death.² Fourth, suffering of illnesses is not a special characteristic of those who are currently sick; it is an experience common to all life-forms which have entered the life-world.

In sum, after focusing on component parts in aggregates, sensory gateways, and perceptual factors, the preconception of the unique existence of human beings, or of an essence exclusive to humans, falls apart

² For example, the World Venerable One told the Bhikkhus that “Those who achieved the following four practices are called the great king of physicians so as to reflect the qualification that they have what it takes to be the king. What are the four abilities? First, [one has to be] familiar with all sicknesses. Second, [one has to] know the origins of all sicknesses. Third, [one has to be] familiar with the antidotes to all sicknesses. Fourth, [one has to] know how to prevent the sicknesses from reoccurring once the sicknesses had been rid from the patient. The Thatāgata-Arhat-Samyaksambuddhas are the great kings of physicians for they had achieved those four practices and they can cure diseases of all sentient beings just like the physicians. What are the four achievements? The Thatāgatas know that ‘This is the Noble Truth of suffering as such. This is the Noble Truth of accumulation of suffering as such. This is the Noble Truth of extinction of suffering as such. This is the Noble Truth of path of extinguishing suffering as such.’ Bhikkhus, the good physicians in the world do not know the realities of the foundation and the antidotes to birth, aging, sickness, death, worries, sorrows, irritations, and sufferings. The Thatāgata-Arhat-Samyaksambuddhas are the great kings of physicians for they know the realities of the foundation and the antidotes to birth, aging, sickness, death, worries, sorrows, irritations, and sufferings. Therefore, the Thatāgata-Arhat-Samyaksambuddhas are called the great kings of physicians.” T. 99, vol. 2, 105a-b.

piece by piece. In its place, one will observe and inquire into the commonalities among all life-forms, such as the appearance of composition, process of change, state of illusion, trend of dissipation, and lack of subjectivity. Then, from the perspective of an ever-changing life journey, the projected or all-encompassing label of “patient” will gradually fade away. On the other hand, the observation of, and inquiry into, the life journey as it is will be exercised more often. The important situations in life include the persistent momentum of related conditions, the cascading rush of the flow of change, the bafflement of being ensnared in the flow of change, and the lack of self-existence. In comparison, when insisting on the unique existence of human beings, the existence of some human-exclusive essence – or asserting both a fixed situation of “patienthood” in those who are currently sick and that the suffering characteristic of sickness is exclusive to patients – one not only fails to see the forest for the trees, but also continuously produces related conditions for a subsequent lifetime and thus is trapped even deeper in the life-world.

As its name suggests, the Path to Liberation will not be merely confined to acquiring consistent comprehension or correct understanding. It will go beyond these in search of liberation from the afflictions incurred while living in the life-world, including sufferings caused by diseases. There are two points worth taking note of when trying to solve the existential problem of suffering in terms of liberation.

First, Buddhist scriptures make use of a simile in referring to the Buddha as the great king of physicians (*mahā-vaidya-rāja*).³ The basic abilities of a good physician are to be familiar with all aspects and origins of diseases, the antidotes to each disease, and how to eradicate each disease. By the same token, the Buddha is required to know all aspects regarding sufferings, the origins of sufferings, the antidotes to each suffering, and how to eradicate each suffering. The suffering referred to is not simply the pain caused by diseases, but all discomfort, turmoil, and hardship incurred during the course of the flow of experience after entering the life-world and being trapped in it. On the one hand, the Buddha who is being referred to as the great king of physicians not only treats corporal or mental diseases, but also cures afflictions common to all sentient beings. On the other hand, this reveals that the sufferings of all life-forms, including human beings and their sufferings incurred in the life-process, can be traced back to their respective sources. After properly discerning their respective related conditions, the afflictions can then be eradicated in the process of life.

Second, even though the Buddha is referred to as the great king of physicians, the treatment provided by the Buddhist Path to Liberation

³ See C. Pierce Salguero, “The Buddhist Medicine King in Literary Context: Reconsidering an Early Medieval Example of Indian Influence on Chinese Medicine and Surgery,” *History of Religions* 48/3 (February 2009) 183–210.

does not amount to a monopoly for physicians. The treatment is in fact an act of teamwork between both parties, which also trains sentient beings to become physicians. This training or cultivation is referred to as practice. The key practices that lead one to liberation include adjusting one's understanding of the life-world and cultivating the capability to excel beyond the life-world. Once one has engaged in such practice, one can anticipate proceeding step by step toward the goal of liberation. Even though the process of birth, aging, sickness, and death is not the goal of the Path to Liberation, it is the means to reach the goal. Therefore, one must practice when healthy, but also when gravely ill.

In addition to the continuous cultivation of the ability to excel beyond the life-world,⁴ and especially in the context of serious diseases, another main training activity on the Path to Liberation is to adjust how one comprehends the life-world. Re-adjusting one's comprehension in this regard not only affects one's insights but also fine-tunes one's sentiments, morality and choices in life. Re-adjusting one's comprehension in this regard not only affects one's insights but also fine-tunes one's sentiments, morality and choices in life. The newly aligned comprehension pervades the life-world, creating sufficient scope and experience, as well as sensible reasoning. Among the units to be fine-tuned, one should at the point closest to most people, i.e., the ideation of human beings, an individual entity, and the self. Most people yield to the conventional understanding that terminology such as 'human being' and 'self' can be mapped onto the corresponding entities of human beings and self in the life-world. As a result, mediocre and self-restricting comprehensions are formed. However, grave illnesses provide great opportunities for the recognition that the "human being" and the "self" are merely loose combinations in a constant flux, and thus prone to rapid decay. After this realization, the only way to solve this problem once and for all is to adjust the understanding of "human beings" and "the self" to "not-human" and "not-self." This move not only reveals the insight that the reality of the life-world cannot be grasped in conventional terms, but also brings forth an apprehension far be-

⁴ Example One: one should keep practicing *catvāri smṛty-upsthānāni* (four foundations of mindfulness; four ways of establishing mindfulness). "It is, friends, because I dwell with a mind well established in the four establishments of mindfulness that the arisen bodily feelings do not persist obsessing my mind. What four? Here, friends, I dwell contemplating the body in the body [...] feelings in feelings [...] mind in mind [...] phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world." Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, vol. II, 1757–1758.

Example Two: One should keep practicing the right mindfulness and right comprehension. "Bhikkus, a bhikkhu should await his time mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you." Bodhi, *Connected Discourse* vol. II, 1266–1268.

yond the limitations of terminology. Comprehending that human beings in the life-world are not human beings as defined in language, and that the self in the life-world is not the self as defined in language, can lead to two aspects of liberation. On the one hand, it will solve once and for all the problems which result from self-constraints and mediocre comprehension. On the other hand, one will not frantically pursue the human being and the self; nor will one be frightened or traumatized by drastic events such as sickness or death in the life journey. As a result, one is freed to concentrate on the on-going practices of the Path to Liberation in order to excel in the life-world.⁵

III. Human Beings as Cognized from the Path to Enlightenment with the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra as an Example

As a path of practices, the goal of the Buddhist Path to Liberation lies in excelling beyond the birth, aging, sickness and death of the life-world. In contrast, the goal of the Buddhist Path to Enlightenment lies in an all-encompassing and thorough enlightenment as well as further guidance and transformation of sentient beings, and a grand-scale long-term purification of the world.

Wisdom is the backbone of the Buddhist Path to Enlightenment. The Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra focuses on the practices of perfection of wisdom (prajñā-pāramitā) through contemplating emptiness, non-duality, and illusory manifestation, in order to unravel supposed individual existence into transitory units which can then be transformed from one

⁵ There are several examples in the Āgama-sūtra that reiterate how many practitioners of the Path to Liberation persist in practicing life medicine while gravely ill. For example, “On one occasion a number of elder bhikkhus were dwelling at Kosambī in Ghosita’s Park. Now on the occasion the Venerable Khemaka was living at Jujube Tree Park, sick, afflicted, gravely ill. [...] Then the Venerable Dāsaka approached the elder bhikkhus and reported what the Venerable Khemaka had said. They told him: “Come, friend Dāsaka, approach the bhikkhu Khemaka and say to him: “The elders say to you, friend Khemaka: these five aggregates subject to clinging, friend, have been spoken of by the Blessed One; that is, the form aggregate subject to clinging, the feeling aggregate subject to clinging, the perception aggregate subject to clinging, the volitional formations aggregate subject to clinging, the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. Does the Venerable Khemaka regard anything as self or as belonging to self among these five aggregates subject to clinging?”” The Venerable Khemaka replied: “Among these five aggregates subject to clinging, I do not regard anything as self or as belonging to self.” Bodhi, *Connected Discourses, vol. I*, 942–946.

life-form to another. In light of this the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra is the foundation and pioneer teaching on the Path to Enlightenment.

Similar to other Buddhist scriptures, the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra also stresses cooperation between instructors and learners in life medicine. The main objective of this scripture is to cure the disease of oblivion to the context of the life-world, while living in the life-world.⁶ In order to become a learned doctor (*vaidyaḥ paṇḍitaḥ*), one must: be endowed with skills in diagnosis (*tantraupayikayā mīmāṃsayā samanvāgataḥ*), be skilled in all remedies (*sarva-bhaiṣajya-kuśalaḥ*), be skilled in the [knowledge of the] origin of all diseases (*sarva-vyādhy-utpatti-kuśalaḥ*), have a kind heart that is compassionate to all life-forms, and be a liberator from all suffering (*sarva-duḥkha-pramocanakaḥ*). As a result, whichever disease he might treat will be liberated (*sa yaṃ yam eva glānaṃ cikitsati, taṃ tam eva mocayat*). Through specialized cultivation, thorough cognition, and a compassionate mentality one can: be conducive to the appeasing of all ignorance (*sarvāvidyōpaśamāya saṃvartate*), be conducive to the removal of all suffering (*sarva-duḥkha-niryātānāya saṃvartate*), and be conducive to the appeasing of all decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and despair (*sarva-jarā-maraṇa-śoka-parideva-duḥkha-daurmanasyōpāyāsānām upaśamāya saṃvartate*).⁷

It would be ignorant to think that life medicine treats only the human being, which is simply one of many forms of sentient beings in the life-world. On the one hand, to identify a certain format of being as 'human' is not all there is in cognition. On the other hand, not know-

⁶ For example, "How do they (the Bodhisattvas) become the world's lights? Here the Bodhisattvas win full enlightenment, and then take away all the darkness and gloom of un-cognition from beings who, for a long time, are enveloped in the membrane of the eggshell of ignorance, and overcome by darkness, and they illuminate them through wisdom." T. 220 (4), vol. 7, 821c; Aṣṭa-Vaidya, 148; Aṣṭa-Woḡihara, 600; PWETL, 189.

⁷ " 'Knowledge' (*vidyā*), of the appeasing of ignorance is that a synonym; 'the comprehension of ignorance' of the appeasing of the mass of ill is that a synonym (This is totally opaque, and not quite a sentence.). Just as if a learned doctor (*vaidya*) handsome and intelligent, were endowed with skill in diagnosis and skilled in all remedies, skilled in the (knowledge of the) origin of all diseases, a liberator from all ill, and whichever disease he would treat, that he would just liberate from (Also not a sentence). And why? Because he is one who is skilled in all remedies, skilled in the (knowledge of the) origin of all diseases, one who frees from all sickness. Just so the third knowledge is conducive to the appeasing of all ignorance, conducive to the removal of all suffering, conducive to the appeasing of all decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and despair. This is called the supramundane wisdom which leads to penetration (*nirvedha*). " T. 220 (16), vol. 7, 1068c-1069a; Suvikrānta-Conze, 7-8; Suvikrānta-Hikata, 10; Suvikrānta-Vaidya, 5.

ing why human beings appear as such, is a trait of the disease called ignorance.

The Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra seldom discusses human beings directly or exclusively. However, a great deal of the passages concerning human beings focus on expounding the context in which human beings emerge. Among them, the contexts range from six pathways of rebirth (ṣaḍ-gati) to a limitless and multilevel world-system. Regardless of its scope, the context always consists of various worldly activities over a long period of time, the cumulative effects of those activities, influences from the surroundings, and subsequent directions to be pursued. Within these related conditions the life-world is choreographed through ever-changing interactions, arising from power struggles, or forces, that push now one way and now another.⁸

Seldom concentrating on human beings, just like the Āgama-sūtra, the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra focuses instead on the common phenomena of sentient beings in the life-world, and the deep-rooted ideation of self, by mediocre beings, on the peripheral level. However, both scriptures mostly deal with core issues, such as the component parts in aggregates (skandha), sensory gateways (āyatana), and perceptual factors (dhātu).

There are four major points regarding the manner in which the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra shifts its focus from human beings to sentient beings. First (in a passive manner) this scripture does not recognize the existence of human beings in themselves, nor of any essence exclusive to human beings. Furthermore, this scripture does not intend to create any specific kind of person. Second (and still passive), this scripture does not identify human beings as such, neither does it identify other beings as gods or animals; nor does it try to simplify human beings into material entities. Third (and no longer passive), in theory, sentient beings are being decomposed into related operational units such as skandha, āyatana, and dhātu. Then all the activities of those units, such as combination, dissipation, (sensory) gateway, and perception, are cognized as empty, non-dual, and illusory manifestations. Fourth (and

⁸ “The Bodhisattva, the great being who dwells in this dwelling of perfect wisdom, deceased in this world, he is reborn here in this very Buddha-field, or, deceased in other Buddha-fields, or among the Tushita Gods, he is reborn here. ... If again, Sariputra, you say, the Bodhisattva, the great being who makes this ‘endeavour’ about perfect wisdom, when he is deceased here, where will he be reborn?’ When he is deceased in this Buddha-field here, he will then pass on from Buddha-field to Buddha-field. ... There are Bodhisattvas who without being skilful in means, accomplish the four trances and course in the perfections. Through their acquisitions of trance they are reborn among the Long-lived gods. If, after they have deceased there, they are reborn among men or gods, ...” T. 220 (2), vol. 7, 18a-b; Dutt 1934, 61–62; Kimura I-1, 80–81; LSPW, 66–68.

active), consistent cognition, resulting from the practices of wisdom in observing the life-world, becomes the backbone in proceeding with the cultivation of a thorough and all-encompassing enlightenment as the ultimate goal. As a result, all life-forms can become practitioners on the Path to Enlightenment, i.e., Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas (sentient beings seeking enlightenment, great sentient beings), or Bodhisattvas in short.⁹

The third point mentioned above indicates that the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra starts from dharmas, closely related to activities of all sentient beings, and cognizes all sentient beings, including human beings, as empty, non-dual and illusory manifestations. In other words, sentient beings, including so-called human beings, are derivative manifestations of the combination, dissipation, (sensory) gateway and perception of the empty, non-dual and illusory dharmas. The inability to cognize how all dharmas combine with each other, dissipate and then derive numerous sentient beings will lead one to simply look at the last step and consider the derivative appearances as the phenomena of sentient beings or human beings. As a result, one will have mistaken the beings as existent in themselves, which is a foundational ignorance (*avidyā*) toward sentient beings or human beings. With ignorance as a pre-existing condition, one is not only oblivious to ignorance, but also allows the subsequent conceptualization, discrimination, assertion, attachment, and pursuit to grow, which entails further entrapment in the life journey of birth, aging, sickness, and death. In turn, one becomes a mediocre sentient being – totally blinded and driven by ignorance – which experiences the flow of birth, aging, sickness, and death. In this account, the life medical practice advocated by the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra traces sentient beings' or human beings' sufferings back to ignorance. Therefore, the key to curing ignorance lies in the acquisition of a thorough realization that none of the so-called sentient beings or human beings exists as such.¹⁰

⁹ For example, “Subhuti: With regard to what the Lord has said, in speaking of ‘Bodhisattva,’ – what is meant by the word ‘Bodhisattva’? The Lord: Nothing real is meant by the word ‘Bodhisattva.’ Because a Bodhisattva trains himself in non-attachment to all dharmas. For the Bodhisattva, the great being, awakes in non-attachment to full enlightenment in the sense that he understands all dharmas. Because he has enlightenment as this aim, an ‘enlightenment-being’ [Bodhisattva], a great being, is so called. Subhuti: Again, when the Lord speaks of a Bodhisattva as ‘a great being,’ – for what reason is a Bodhisattva called a ‘great being’? The Lord: A Bodhisattva is called ‘a great being’ in the sense that he will cause a great mass and collection of beings to achieve the highest.” T. 220 (4), vol. 7, 766b; Aṣṭa-Vaidya, 9; Aṣṭa-Wogihara, 75–80; PWETL, 89.

¹⁰ For example, “Sariputra: How then do they exist? The Lord: As they do not exist, so they exist. And so, since they do not exist [*avidyamāna*], they are

What makes one ponder is that the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, in focusing on the development of wisdom to practice life medicine, identifies sentient beings or human beings as merely temporary sheaths. No sentient being or human being exists in itself, nor can it continue existing as a sentient being or human being forever. Furthermore, no sentient being or human being can ever contain any essence exclusively. On the one hand, if one scrutinizes so-called existence or solid content, one will find it to be nothing but wrestling, surge, and pursuit of numerous actions, combinatory undulations and dissipations of empty dharmas. Therefore, such empty dharmas are far from being equal to the existence of any life-form or any individual entity in the life-world, let alone any essence exclusive to any life-form or any individual entity. On the other hand, any attempt to inquire into the reality of so-called sentient beings or human beings will turn out, in fact, to be either a discriminating cognition of a short-lived appearance, or a usage of conventions in language. Under factual and thorough scrutiny, one realizes that the terminology related to sentient beings or human beings amounts to mere add-on names that are not equal to any dharma (related operational unit), or any a-dharma (unrelated operational unit). In other words, names as such are adventitious (āgantuka) and groundless (a-vastuka/without a corresponding entity). In themselves they are nothing (an-ātmīya/without anything belonging to a self), and they are unfounded in objective fact (an-ārambaṇa/without objective support). Upon thoroughly realizing the emptiness of dharmas, one should no longer react to the constantly changing world by adding firmly established names to sentient beings or human beings. Furthermore, one should not, because of some fleeting impression, mistakenly believe it has been unveiled (pari-dīpanā/revelation) that there are such things as sentient beings or human beings, existent in themselves in the life-world.¹¹

called [the result of] ignorance [avidyā]. Foolish, untaught, common people have settled down in them. Although they do not exist, they have constructed all the dharmas. Having constructed them, attached to the two extremes, they do not know or see those dharmas [in their true reality]. So they construct all dharmas which yet do not exist. Having constructed them, they settle down in the two extremes. They then depend on that link as a basic fact, and construct past, future and present dharmas. After they have constructed, they settle down in name and form. They have constructed all dharmas which yet do not exist. But while they construct all dharmas which yet do not exist, they neither know nor see the path which is that which truly is. In consequence they do not go forth from the triple world, and do not wake up to the reality-limit. For that reason they come to be styled 'fools.' They have no faith in the true dharma. But a Bodhisattva does not settle down in any dharma." T. 220 (4), vol. 7, 765c; Aṣṭa-Vaidya, 8; Aṣṭa-Woḡihara, 65–68; PWETL, 87–88.

¹¹ For example, Subhuti: "What factual entity does the word 'being' denote? Sakra: The word 'being' denotes no dharma or non-dharma. It is a term

With respect to this emptiness, all that happens in the life-world is due to related conditions, and that it will eventually reach the end of a period of process. It is exactly because so-called sentient beings or human beings are empty that, along with the motility or stirring of related conditions, the constituent parts get worn off, stuck, impacted, and loosened, which entails the loop of change: various symptoms, death and rebirth. By cognizing the changes in causes and conditions of various symptoms, one can accordingly cognize the changes in causes and conditions of various sentient beings or human beings. Wisdom as such does not doggedly grasp onto the image of any so-called sentient being, human being, or disease. Rather, constantly excelling wisdom transforms one from merely a temporary life-form to an ever-advancing professional practitioner on the Path to Enlightenment. The core life-medical teaching of the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra lies in the recognition of the emptiness of sentient beings or human beings. As a result, one will no longer identify oneself as a patient and will be transformed into a Bodhisattva focusing on the development of the prajñāpāramitā.

IV. Two Chapters of the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa that Teach How to Cognize Mankind: “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” and “Contemplating Sentient Beings”

The Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa is famous for its advanced Path to Enlightenment for the following three reasons. First of all, instead of staying within a narrowly confined area engaging in activities such as passing down God’s will, cramming a mass of knowledge into devotees’ heads, or accumulating worldly benefits, it inspires and leads practitioners to an ever-higher level in both theory and practice. Second, in addition to bringing the Bodhisattva’s practices to a variety of sentient beings, it provides customized services to fit each sentient being in each particular case, rather than arrogantly forcing all sentient beings to accept its preaching. Third, the ideas and actions involved in the Bodhisattva’s practices will approach the realities of the life-world, life journey, mental experience and path of cultivation. Furthermore, it will declare the inconceivability (a-cintyatva; a-cintyatā/beyond conceivability) of thorough reality. It is not bogged down in a knowledge system that consists of conceptualization of temporary appearances; nor is it circum-

that has been added on [to what is really there] as something adventitious, groundless, as nothing in itself, unfounded in objective fact. Subhuti: Has thereby [i.e., by uttering the word ‘being’] any being been shown up [as an ultimate fact]? Sakra: No indeed, Holy Subhuti!” T. 220 (4), vol. 7, 772a-b; Aṣṭa-Vaidya, 24; Aṣṭa-Wogihara, 178–179; PWETL, 101.

scribed in a naming system comprised of value-fixed terminology or phrases.

In performing an advanced Bodhisattva act it would be impossible not to have an advanced perspective on sentient beings or human beings. In other words, if one does not have any particular idea, or merely has mediocre or stereotypical opinions about sentient beings or human beings, then it would be difficult to even imagine an advanced feature within the fields of philosophy or religion. The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* reveals at least three characteristics on this topic. First, it highly values the cognition of sentient beings or human beings, and discusses this topic in detail in two chapters. Second, instead of being isolated from context in language, theory or ideology, the discussion is grounded in the reality of the life-world, especially the sufferings of sentient beings or human beings due to sickness. Thirdly, the issue of cognizing sentient beings or human beings is not treated as trivial, peripheral, or routine. Rather, this issue is taken seriously as one of the core units in the performance of the Bodhisattva's practices.

One point to be clarified is the term "advanced perspective on sentient beings or human beings." This does not mean elevating sentient beings or human beings to the level of celestial beings, or to the point where they will never get sick or die. In fact, the state of being advanced depends on whether one can unravel the birth, aging, sickness, and death of sentient beings or human beings so as to gain an advanced understanding. Furthermore, the advanced state also depends on whether one can cultivate the advanced practices out of the process of birth, aging, sickness, and death of so-called sentient beings or human beings. If one identifies sentient beings or human beings with certain fixed images or labels, then those added, fragmented, fixated identifications might make it difficult or even impossible to gain further advanced understanding. In contrast, if a sentient being or human being falls ill or passes away, it does not mean that that being is inferior. This is because sickness and death do not get in the way of advancing in understanding, or practicing advanced cultivation.

Based on the above idea of advancement the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* cognizes sentient beings or human beings at an advanced level, and takes on advanced practices of the Bodhisattva as well. Although the entire scripture is about how the Buddhist Path to Enlightenment cognizes sentient beings or human beings, if one wishes to narrow down the text, then the chapters "Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness" and "Contemplating Sentient Beings" deserve special attention. The chapter "Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness" focuses on how to give consolation to someone dealing with illness (*glāna-pratisaṃmodanā*) and how to pacify one's own mind (*sva-cittaṃ nidhyapayitam*). The clues intertwined from the above two threads – consolation and pacification – consistently bring out the advanced perspec-

tives on sentient beings or human beings. The chapter “Contemplating Sentient Beings” unfolds all-encompassing aspects in teaching practitioners how to cognize sentient beings. However, due to the constraints of this paper, the next section will focus on the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” while leaving the chapter “Contemplating Sentient Beings” to future study.

V. Human Beings Cognized through Consolation with the Chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” as an Example

The chapter in question starts when Shakyamuni Buddha asks the crown prince, Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīḥ kumara-bhūtaḥ) to pay a visit to Vimalakīrti of the Licchavi clan (Vimalakīrtir licchaviḥ) who is sick. Following this, life medicinal treatment unfolds: how to console those who are sick and how to pacify the mind when one is sick.

In short, the main theme of the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” is making the transition from life medicine to life cultivation. In passive terms, neither the sick nor the consoling party should panic, be baffled, or get stuck in illness. In active terms, one should take this opportunity to further comprehend ideas concerning the life-world, to build interactions with the life-world, and to cultivate more powerful abilities in the life-world. The motif presented as such is called the domain of the Bodhisattva (bodhisattva-gocara) in the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness.”

In moving from life medicine toward the main goal of life cultivation with the domain of the Bodhisattva as the main motif, the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” shifts among sentient beings or human beings, diseases, related operating units, consolation, pacification, and the domain of the Bodhisattva. In doing so it builds a brand new operating system. In addition to enlarging the vistas of comprehending sentient beings or human beings, it shows how sentient beings or human beings can rise from sickness and become advanced Bodhisattvas. This system can be elucidated by the following four aspects: (1) the relations between the domain of the Bodhisattva and sickness, (2) consolation in relation to the Bodhisattva’s practices, (3) pacifying those who are sick in relation to the Bodhisattva’s practices, and (4) the domain of the Bodhisattva in the context of sickness.

1. The Relations between the Domain of the Bodhisattva and Sickness

According to the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness,” it is necessary to recognize the relationship between the domain

of the Bodhisattva and sickness in order to practice the Path to Enlightenment with clear understanding. It is obviously stated in this chapter that getting sick is inevitable during the practice on the Path to Enlightenment. As a result, there is no need to complain about sickness or to blow it out of proportion; nor should one perversely avoid it or hide from it. The main reasons for this are as follows. First, practice on the Path to Enlightenment has to take place in the life-world and proceed in and out of the life journey. Since the life journey is sutured together with segments of birth, aging, sickness, and death, getting sick is part of the life journey. Second, one of the tasks of the advanced Bodhisattva, is – persistently with an ever-emerging compassion toward all sentient beings trapped in the flow of life and death – to guide and transform sentient beings on a grand scale. Sentient beings ride the flow of the life journey with little control due to their pursuit of the life-world. Consequently, the Bodhisattvas who guide and transform sentient beings get sick during the course of their practice.¹²

2. Consolation in Relation to the Bodhisattva's Practices

It is inevitable for sentient beings to get sick when pursuing the life-world. By the same token, it is also inevitable for Bodhisattvas to get sick while advancing and excelling on the Path to Enlightenment, and while guiding and transforming sentient beings. In short, sickness is merely a transitory segment of a life journey which consists of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Thus, in and of itself, sickness is not a problem. The problem lies in oblivion to the context of sickness, disordered emotions caused by diseases, and entrapment within diseases. The chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” serves as an example for teaching Bodhisattvas how to console another Bodhisattva in sickness. On the one hand, when facing sickness, one is not left without a choice. What is more, one should not follow banal conventions by merely duplicating mediocre ideations, nor should one worsen common mediocre problems. On the other hand, the Bodhisattva's practices will unravel sickness and relate to the shifts of mind-body, sentient beings and life cultivation. As a result, the sickness itself will not become a whirlpool to swallow one's life. Instead, sickness becomes an opportunity for one to switch gears in the life-world and to further refine life cultivation.

¹² Example 1, “mahā-karuṇā-samutthito bodhisatvānām vyādhiḥ.” (The sicknesses of the Bodhisattvas arise from great compassion.) Vkn 2006, 47; T 474, 525c; T 475, 544b; T 476, 568a; Vkn-Lamotte, 118; Vkn Thurman, 43.

Example 2, “sattvādhiṣṭhāno hi mañjuśrīḥ bodhisatvasya saṃsāraḥ. saṃsāra-nīritaś ca vyādhiḥ.” (Mañjuśrī, for the Bodhisattva, the world consists only of living beings, and sickness is inherent in living in the world.) Vkn 2006, 47; T 474, 525c; T 475, 544b; T 476, 568a; Vkn-Lamotte, 118; Vkn Thurman, 43.

In the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness,” Mañjuśrī, the head who pays a visit, expounds the following five key points for consolation: emotion, cognition, sentient beings, learning, and solution.

First, with respect to *emotion*: What consolation can offer is that one should avoid, at all costs, falling into chaotic panic or covetousness.¹³ Furthermore, one should maintain one’s mind in an undefiled and fresh state prior to the adding-on of any emotions.¹⁴

Second, with reference to *cognition*: Sickness, birth, aging, and death are the organic and primary instructors in the life-world. They are better than all theories put together, and are surely superior to all the professional instructors in the world. Therefore, what consolation can offer for the sick is that one should consider the sickness as an instructor in order to observe and cognize truly what is happening when one is alive in the world. One can try to attain the insight that the body is impermanent (*kāyā-nityatā*), the body is suffering (*kaya-duḥkhatā*), the body is not self (*kāyān-ātmatā*), and the body is tranquil (*kāya-sāntatā*).

Third, with reference to *sentient beings*: Since sickness does not just happen to one single individual, there is no reason to pity one’s self for being sick. Actively, what consolation can offer is the observation that there are many other sentient beings that are also sick. In addition, after personally experiencing sickness, one will be more empathetic and sympathetic to the afflictions sentient beings suffer from diseases. Consequently, one will be motivated to understand and cure diseases.¹⁵

Fourth, with reference to *learning*: One of the basic temperaments of the Bodhisattva’s practices consists in the realization that one has to thoroughly facilitate life cultivation through borrowing and utilizing the process of life to the fullest extent. It has been like this in the past, will be like this in the future, and certainly is this way right now. Since the life journey is borrowed, it is inevitable that sickness is included in the whole package. As a result, what consolation can offer is that being sick provides an opportunity to discern what can be learned, developed, achieved, and contributed on this path of cultivation. One had been

¹³ For example, “a-paritarṣaṇatayā ... pratisaṃmoditavyaḥ.” (the lack of craving.) Vkn 2006, 49; T 474, 526a; T 475, 544c; T 476, 568b; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 44.

¹⁴ For example, “ādi-viśuddhatayā ... pratisaṃmoditavyaḥ.” (to maintain the primal purity.) Vkn 2006, 49; T 474, 526a; T 475, 544c; T 476, 568b; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 44.

¹⁵ For example, “sva-glānyena para-sattva-glāna-karuṇatayā ... pratisaṃmoditavyaḥ.” (He should encourage his empathy for all living beings on account of his own sickness.) Vkn 2006, 49; T 474, 526a; T 475, 544c; T 476, 568b; Vkn-Lamotte, 120; Vkn Thurman, 44.

walking on this path as such in the past. Even though one is sick right now, one is working on the cultivation as usual. And one will keep making efforts on the journey ahead. By doing so, one can switch from the life journey of birth, aging, sickness, and death, to thoroughgoing learning on the path of cultivation.¹⁶

Fifth, with reference to a *solution*: The ultimate tip on consoling sickness is the courage to unravel the so-called individual entity and sickness. As a result, one will not only connect with numerous sentient beings in the world, but also search for solutions for diseases, including curing diseases and facilitating life cultivation. Therefore, vowing to become a king of physicians and encourage each other to become one as well, especially a king of physicians who works on life medicine, will also provide consolation to those who are sick.¹⁷

In sum, to console those who are sick by means of the Bodhisattva's practices reveals that being sick does not mean that an individual is subjugated by the sickness. Sickness, rather, can in fact be connected with sentient beings or human beings. It is also possible for one to cure or eliminate diseases. Adjusting emotions and implementing cognition are involved in the process of consolation, which is the arena for learning in its entirety. As such, consolation will not coerce those who are sick into becoming "patients." Rather, it will result in the dawn of the king of physicians.

3. Pacifying Those Who Are Sick in Relation to the Bodhisattva's Practices

After Mañjuśrī expounds the main points for consolation, Vimalakīrti, who is sick, follows suit and elucidates some key points on how to pacify sickness. Under the circumstance of causes and conditions, there might be a temporary difference between the one who is sick and the one who consoles. However, the kernel of the conversation lies in the shift from sickness to the Bodhisattva's practices. One of the keys to this shift is actively and positively doing meaningful things, especially

¹⁶ For example, "kuśāla-mūlābhimukhī-karaṇatayā ... pratisaṃmoditavyaḥ." (He should encourage him not to be distressed, but to manifest the roots of virtue.) Vkn 2006, 49; T 474, 526a; T 475, 544c; T 476, 568b; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 44.

¹⁷ For example, "sadā vīryārambhāc ca vaidya-rājo bhaviṣyasi sarva-vyād-hīnāṃ śamayitēti evaṃ bodhisatvena bodhisatvo glānaḥ pratisaṃmoditavyaḥ." (And thus to always strive to become the king of healers, who can cure all sicknesses. Thus should a Bodhisattva console a sick Bodhisattva, in such a way as to make him happy.) Vkn 2006, 49; T 474, 526a; T 475, 544c; T 476, 568b; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 44.

life medicine, rather than merely passively receiving professional medical treatment, or waiting for consolation from others.

Oftentimes, the medical treatments provided by medical professionals cannot replace the mental adjustments or conceptual re-directions that help the sick to pacify their sickness. One of the most inspiring parts of the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” is the focus on pacifying sickness as one of the essential requirements in the Bodhisattva’s practices. Covering a wide range of topics, Vimalakīrti speaks in detail from his personal experience of pacifying sickness. However, for the sake of brevity, this paper will only discuss the topics of diseases and sentient beings.

First of all, how should one cognize diseases? In general, most people focus on specific symptoms, problems, locations, entities, or units. Specific names are given to diseases, which are then appended to so-called patients. In this context, receiving professional medical treatment seems to be the only option for patients. However the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” makes it clear that one must not impose on oneself any treatment/therapy which seems to miss the mark, nor any superficial or rigidly framed theory. Moreover, one should not get stuck within a state, or under an attribute or name. On the contrary, to observe firsthand the appearance and disappearance, the coming and going of disease, one should be as fluid as a scudding cloud, or flowing water. Especially important is to look along the timeline of a disease in order to gain insight into the chain of causation (*nidāna*) and the key factors in its extermination.¹⁸ Once the process of causes and conditions of the so-called disease has been comprehended, one can even boldly assert that the so-called disease is unreal (*a-bhūta*) and nonexistent (*a-sat*).¹⁹

Secondly, how does one cognize sentient beings or human beings who are sick? Most people tend to consider the disease to be the essential factor, thinking of sickness as the whole reality or the major presenting feature. Then the essential factor of sickness is projected onto sentient beings or human beings by means of fabricated names. The resulting labels seem plausible, such as “patient,” “sick cat,” or “patients of such-and-such diseases.” By contrast, the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” does not take diseases to be the bottom

¹⁸ For example, “yato nidānāc ca punar vyādhir utpadyate, tasya parijñāyai tebhyo dharmam deśayiṣyāmaḥ.” (One has only to teach them the Dharma for them to realize the basis from which sicknesses arises.) Vkn 2006, 50; T 474, 526a; T 475, 545a; T 476, 568c; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 46.

¹⁹ For example, “yathā mama vyādhir abhūto ‘sann, evaṃ sarva-sattvānām api vyādhir abhūto ‘sann iti.” (Just as my sickness is unreal and nonexistent, so the sicknesses of all living beings are unreal and nonexistent.) Vkn 2006, 51; T 474, 526b; T 475, 545a; T 476, 569a; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 46.

line, nor does it consider being sick as the whole reality. Consequently, it does not impose any disease-name onto any sentient being or human being. Once the label sickness is taken away it becomes possible to unravel sentient beings or human beings into component parts, layers of aggregates, networks, surging units, processes of change, solutions to problems, or even ways to transcend suffering. As a result, one may gain insight into more overarching aspects, comprehend more profoundly, and come up with more thorough discourses. Following this holistic healing, the chapter "Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness" claims that, regardless of the severity and duration of a disease, no sentient being or human being who enters the life-world will become a patient merely by contracting it. Furthermore, those who have conventionally deemed to be sick are, in reality, not really sick.

The key to understanding how the chapter "Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness" gains such insight lies in refusing to accept the imposition of systematized labels, as well as in unravelling superficial "bottom lines." In the example of sickness, the initial connection of disease and body can be treated as follows. Physical bodies can be unraveled into layers and layers of temporary combinations of multiple units. By the same token, the so-called bottom lines of diseases can also be unraveled into layers and layers of temporary combinations, changes, and dissipations of various units. Alongside a more overarching, profound, and long-term scrutiny, the inquiry into how sentient beings get sick after entering into the life-world will not be confined to material concerns. Rather, the attention will be broadened and traced to differentiating cognition, agitated states of mind, attitudes of attachment, and even further back, to activities in the long past life journey. Once the sickness is unraveled and dissipated, as described above, so-called patients or even the so-called sentient beings or human beings will also be unraveled and dissipated.

Consequently, the chapter "Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness" is not fixated on the so-called sick sentient being or human being; nor does it consider sentient beings or human beings as the bottom line of existence. The insight that sentient beings or human beings, in this lifetime, are not sentient beings or human beings in themselves shows that what enters into the life-world is not any specific entity with a fixed existence in itself. Rather, what enters into the life-world is the on-going life journey composed of differentiating cognition, agitated states of mind, and attitudes of attachment over an extremely long period of time. The result is the manifestations of the ever-changing combinations of the mind-body complex, as well as the various diseases of the mind-body complex.

By now, the importance of the operation and re-direction of views on sickness and sentient beings, for pacifying sickness in life medicine,

should be evident. If one wishes to stop cognizing entities as sickness and to comprehend and solve sickness thoroughly, then one cannot simply be alienated from or cut off from the so-called sickness. Once sickness is unraveled in the life-world, then what has happened in the life journey for eons will be involved, especially the views on sentient beings, human beings, and sickness. After a thorough analysis, the long-term sources of sickness will reveal themselves as the accumulation of the blockages in conceptualized views, constant agitation of the sentiments, and self-centered attachment, which have existed since sentient beings came into the life-world.²⁰ Therefore, regardless of whether one appears to be sick or not right now, one should ponder how to pacify the life journey and pacify sickness. In this respect, the operation and re-direction of views on sickness and views on sentient beings are crucial topics.

4. The Domain of the Bodhisattva in the Context of Sickness

Even though sickness causes discomfort, pain and irritation, being sick is a great opportunity for raising questions as well as for being alert to and clarifying all the entangled problems in the life-world. If one stops expecting spiritual mercy from conventional medical treatments, neither blindly put one's trust in medicine or medical institutions, nor disregarding the reality of diseases, like an ostrich burying its head in the sand, then one is ready for the unfolding of life medicine, in which the pacifying of diseases serves as a clue.

In the chapter "Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness," the life-world is consistently cognized as empty and non-dual. Therefore, unlike most people, life medicine does not have reclaiming the health of the sick as its goal; nor does it make a real division between sickness and health. Rather, life medicine stresses the importance of rectifying

²⁰ For example, "pūrvāntā-sad-viparyāsa-karma-samutthāna-samutthito 'yaṃ vyādhir a-bhūta-parikalpa-kleśa-samutthitaḥ. na punar atra kaś-cit paramārthato dharma upalabhyate yasyaiṣa vyādhīḥ. tat kasmād dhetoḥ. cātur-mahābhautiko 'yaṃ samucchrayaḥ. na caiṣāṃ dhātūnāṃ kaś-cit svāmī, na samutthāpayitā. an-ātmā hy ayaṃ samucchrayaḥ. yo 'yaṃ vyādhir nāma nāyaṃ paramārthata upalabhyate, anyatrātmābhīniveśāt." (Sickness arises from total involvement in the process of misunderstanding from beginningless time. It arises from the passions that result from unreal mental constructions, and hence ultimately nothing is perceived which can be said to be sick. Why? The body is the issue of the four main elements, and in these elements there is no owner and no agent. There is no self in this body, and except for arbitrary insistence on self, ultimately no "I" which can be said to be sick can be apprehended.) Vkn 2006, 49; T 474, 526a; T 475, 544c-545a; T 476, 568b; Vkn-Lamotte, 121; Vkn Thurman, 45.

ideas. Re-directing people to comprehend emptiness and non-duality will bring about life medicine in one's life, as well as actively leading one to facilitate life cultivation.

On the one hand, the concept of emptiness can explain how units of sentient beings, human beings, or diseases are not existent in themselves; but result from related conditions, consist of constituent parts, and are in constant flux. Furthermore, the combinations of the units will dissipate or decay. On the other hand, the very emptiness provides a foundational openness that turns the direction of its related conditions or adjusts the level of related conditions according to the situation of any given moment. Therefore, through the experience sickness, one can gain the insight that all sentient beings, human beings, and diseases are empty. After such a realization, one will not seek to reclaim health, nor will one be content with merely being healthy – which is not unlike the frog-boiling effect, being totally oblivious to the wear and tear of the process of birth, aging, sickness, and death.

By making the most of the situation of getting sick and leading by the comprehension of emptiness, the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” exemplifies the foundational openness in the life-world and brings out the systematic cultivation of the Path to Enlightenment. In addition to being the kernel of the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness,” this remarkable practice is also the main framework that the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa as well as various Mahāyāna Sūtras advocate, elucidate and discuss. According to the domain of the Bodhisattva described in the chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness,” life medicine and life cultivation, and their resulting cognition of sentient beings or human beings, can be summed up in the following three points. Firstly, based on the foundational openness of the life-world, one does not need to confine oneself to the level of biology or life in birth, aging, sickness, and death as the only direction. While living in the life-world, one can switch to an all-encompassing and thorough enlightenment, i.e. to the direction of life cultivation. Secondly, this enlightenment and direction does not contain any foundational restrictions. No matter how serious the problem is, there is always a way to proceed or transform it. In addition, the cultivation, abilities, and skills required to keep living in the life-world can all be developed and achieved. Furthermore, regardless of the level of the goal of cultivation, it is eventually achievable. Thirdly, based on the foundational openness of the life-world, life medicine and life cultivation are not narrowly confined to the so-called individual entity, but can be extended to the vast life-world and carry on a wide variety of salvific acts in the life-world. To sum up, living organisms that appear to be sentient beings or human beings are thoroughly empty in the foundation on the life journey and lack fixed existences in themselves. However, life medicine and life cultivation can transform sen-

tient beings or human beings from transitory levels of living activities or living organisms to practitioners with goals in the direction of an all-encompassing and thorough enlightenment. The process described above is the domain of the Bodhisattva.²¹

VI. Conclusion

Buddhist teachings concerning the contributions of the life journey, the contents of life, and the paths out of suffering to life medicine and life cultivation provide us with an abundant body of insightful and highly advanced doctrine and religious practice. The profusion of Buddhist teachings lies in their encompassing vision of the life-world in its entirety. They spring from the process of birth, aging, sickness, and death to establish the Path to Liberation and the Path to Enlightenment as solutions. They are insightful because they do not stop at appearances. They do not take the current states of sentient beings or human beings for granted; nor do they get bogged down in the naming of sentient beings or human beings. Rather, they unravel the appearances of sentient beings or human beings in this lifetime into constituent parts, sensory gateways, perceptual factors, layers of aggregates, networks of related conditions, and causative factors. After close observation, they gain insight into the combination and dissipation of the process of change, coming up with a groundbreaking discourse of emptiness, non-duality, illusion and transformation. They are advanced inasmuch as they do not treat sentient beings or human beings (in this lifetime) as sentient beings or human beings in themselves. They lay no heavy burden on sentient beings, human beings, living organisms, activities of daily living, or diseases. They are based on the foundational openness to advancement, through the Path to Liberation, by leaping out of the cyclic of life and death, or through the Path to Enlightenment, by all-encompassing thorough enlightenment.

The chapter “Consolation to Someone Dealing with Illness” in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* begins in consolation issued from the Bodhisattva’s

²¹ For example, “*yac chūnyatā-gocaraś ca sarvākāra-guṇa-paryeṣṭi-gocaraś ca, ayaṃ bodhisatvasya gocaraḥ. yad ānimitta-gocaraś ca satva-pramocanārambaṇa-vitarka-gocaraś ca, ayaṃ bodhisatvasya gocaraḥ. yad apraṇihita-gocaraś ca saṃcintya-bhava-gati-saṃdarśana-gocaraś ca, ayaṃ bodhisatvasya gocaraḥ.*” (The domain of voidness, yet where one cultivates all types of virtues, such is the domain of the Bodhisattva. The domain of signlessness, where one keeps in sight the deliverance of all living beings, such is the domain of the Bodhisattva. The domain of wishlessness, where one voluntarily manifests lives in the world, such is the domain of the Bodhisattva.) Vkn 2006, 53; T 474, 526c; T 475, 545c; T 476, 569c; Vkn-Lamotte, 129-130; Vkn Thurman, 48.

practices. Sickness does not permanently tie any individual to illnesses. On the contrary, it connects sentient beings or human beings to each other. By way of life medicine and life cultivation, diseases can be cured or extinguished in the process of life, and therefore transformed into the domain of the Bodhisattva.

VII. Abbreviations

- Aṣṭa-Vaidya: Vaidya, P.L. (ed). *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā: With Haribhadra's Commentary Called Āloka*. Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1960.
- Aṣṭa-Wogihara: Wogihara, U. (ed). *Abhisamayālaṅkāṛ'ālokā Prajñāpāramitāvyaḅhyā*. The Work of Haribhadra together with the Text Commented on. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1932.
- Dutt 1934: Dutt, Nalinaksha ed. *The Pañcaviṁśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. London: Luzac & Co, 1934.
- Kimura I-1: Kimura, Takayasu (ed). *Pañcaviṁśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā: I-1*. Tokyo: Sankibo Busshorin Publishing, 2007.
- LSPW: Conze, Edward (tr). *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.
- PWETL: Conze, Edward (tr). *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*. Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1975.
- Suvikrānta-Conze: Conze, Edward (tr). "The Questions of Suvikrāntavikrāmin," *Perfect Wisdom: The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*. Totnes: Buddhist Publishing Group, 1993, 1–78.
- Suvikrānta-Hikata: Hikata, Ryusho (ed). *Suvikrāntavikrāmi-Paripṛcchā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1983.
- Suvikrānta-Vaidya: Vaidya, P.L. (ed). "Chapter 1: Suvikrāntavikrāmi-paripṛcchā Nāma Sārdha-dvi-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā," *Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṅgraha*, part I, *Buddhist Sanskrit Texts*, no. 17. Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1961, 1–74.
- T.: Taishō-shinshū-daizōkyō 大正新脩大藏經 (Taishō Revised Tripiṭaka).
- T. 220 (4), vol. 7: Hsüan-tsang 玄奘 tr. *Ta pan jo po lo mi to ching* 大般若波羅蜜多經 *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, Assembly 4 (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) T. 220 (4) vol. 7, 763b–865a.

- T. 474: Chih-ch'ien 支謙 (tr). Wei mo chieh ching 維摩詰經 (Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra) T. 474, vol. 14, 519a–536c.
- T. 475: Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (tr). Wei mo chieh so shuo ching 維摩詰所說經 (Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra) T. 475, vol. 14, 537a–557b.
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