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Wōnhyo's Hua-yen Thought

KOH IK-JIN

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I. Hua-yen School's Classification of the Awakening of Faith

Ven. Wōnhyo (617-680), one of the great thinkers of the Silla dynasty, expressed his view on the Awakening of Faith (Hereafter, AF) in this way—the work unified divergent doctrines of Buddhist texts into one consistent doctrinal system. The extant works of Wōnhyo also stand on the same line. So, it may be said that his thought is formulated on the basis of the AF.

However, the AF has been classified into the third group by Fa-tsang (643-712), founder of the Hua-yen School, in his five-fold classification of Buddhist Texts—namely i) *The Teaching of Hinayāna*, ii) *Initial Teaching of Mahāyāna*, iii) *Final Teaching*, iv) *Sudden Teaching* and v) *Consummate Teaching of Ekayāna*. If so, Wōnhyo's thought also might be classified into the third grade. In other words, such classification may mean that the level of Wōnhyo's thought has not reached that of the consummate teaching of Ekayāna. Then, the question duly arises, "Could it really be so?"

In order to analyze this question, I first

felt a need to make a comparative analysis of the commentaries on the AF by Wōnhyo and Fa-tsang. And so if their views on the AF by Wōnhyo and Fa-tsang are the same, we may follow the classification of the Hua-yen School. As to the writings on the text by Fa-tsang, there are extant five volumes of commentary and another one volume of supplement on the subject. In comparing these writings to that of Wōnhyo, I surveyed to see on what part of the text Fa-tsang put his emphasis and how he came to categorize it as the final teaching of Mahāyāna. As a result, I found out that while the writings of Fa-tsang had been greatly influenced by Wōnhyo, his theme had been widely different from that of Wōnhyo in some fundamental points.

In the *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith*, Fa-tsang argues that both *Lankavatara Sutra* and the AF belong to the "Tathāgatagarbha thought", saying that in this theory "substance and phenomenon are so flexible that there is no conflict between them." In other words, Fa-tsang sees the focal point of the AF laying in the theory of co-origination (Pratītya-samutpāda) func-

tion of Tathāgatagarbha. This theory is expounded in the AF in its explanation of the phenomenal work, so-called the 'gate of origination-cessation'.

Accordingly, Fa-tsang sees the religious objectives of Mahāyāna—described in the AF as the great essence, great form, and great function—also belong to the gate of origination-cessation. This viewpoint of Fa-tsang makes it clear that he places the focal point of the AF in the gate of origination-cessation. So, it may be safely assumed that Fa-tsang categorized the A.F. as the final teaching of Mahāyāna.

II. Wōnhyo's View on the Awakening of Faith

Then, what is the standpoint of Wōnhyo? Unlike Fa-tsang who, more or less, placed the focal point of the AF on the gate of origination-cessation, Wōnhyo thinks the text was written by Aśvaśośa to expound the religious ideal of Mahāyāna by overcoming the ideological confrontation between the 'middle-way' school (*Madhyamika*) and the 'consciousness-only' school (*vijnāna-vāda*).

Top put it in more detail, the middle-way thought of Nāgārjuna can not allow anything to exist by breaking (or negating) the whole things, while the consciousness-only school of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu can not negate its own ultimate discrimination owing to its disposition of establishment. Consequently, a grave doctrinal problem arises—"Is there no way of affirming our world of reality?"

Then, how could this transcendental tendency of both schools' be overcome? The solution could be found easily by accommodating the theories of both schools. The 'breaking' function of the middle-way school can be made flexible by dint of the consciousness-only school and the 'establishing' function of the consciousness-only school may be made permissible by dint of

the middle-way school.

From such a standpoint, the AF expounds that there are two gates of 'suchness' (*tathata*) and origination-cessation, fabricating the structures of the two gates in details. The gate of suchness and the gate of origination-cessation each correspond to the schools of middle-way and consciousness-only. After that, the text goes into a discussion of the Mahāyāna ideals, expressing it in the form of three great things, namely, the great essence (body), great form and great function. There is no need to say that this threefold greatness of Mahāyāna ideal arises from the ultimate source of one mind at which the two gates meet together to the effect of such action.

If we see the AF from such a "formational" viewpoint as Wōnhyo does, the text's fundamental purpose seems to consist in the threefold greatness of the Mahāyāna ideal rather than in the gate of origination-cessation. Of them, the great essence (body) may be said to belong to the gate of suchness, while the great form (phenomenon) and function belong to the gate of origination-cessation. It is because only then the two gates could be ultimately accommodated for mutual action. Wōnhyo's commentary on the AF well conforms to this standpoint. Therefore, we must say that his view on the AF starts from an entirely different angle from that of Fa-tsang. At the same time, even though the AF is assigned to the final teaching of Mahāyāna in the Hua-yen School's classification of texts, Wōnhyo's Buddhist thought can by no means be viewed as such.

III. Fourfold Text Classification and the Universal Truth

Then, is Wōnhyo's thought of the AF equal to the consummate teaching of Ekayāna of Hwa-yen School? To shed a light on this question, the writer feels a need to see how Wōnhyo assigns *Avatamska Sutra* to his text classification.

According to extant writings available today, Wōnhyo's text classification takes two forms: one is to take all sutras such as *Prajñā*, *Saddharma Pundarika (Lotus)*, *Avatamska* or *Nirvāna* to be the same supreme teaching and the other is to differentiate these sutras. In the case of the latter, the following fourfold classification is widely known as his representative classification.

- (1) Separate teaching of three vehicles. . . such as *Agama Sutra*
- (2) Common teaching of three vehicles. . . such as *Prajñāpāramitā* or *Sandhinirmocana* sutras
- (3) Partial teaching of one vehicle (Ekayāna). . . such as *Yōngnak* and *Brahmajāra* sutras
- (4) Consummate teaching of one vehicle. . . such as *Avatamska* and *Samanvābhāra* sutras

This fourfold grouping of Wōnhyo reveals that he classified the lifetime teachings of Buddha according to the theory of "three-vehicles and one-vehicle" expounded in the *Lotus Sutra*. The terminology of the separate and common teaching of three vehicles are found in Wōnhyo's *Synoptic Writing on the Lotus Sutra*. So it may be assumed that the classification idea has come from the work. And the division of the one vehicle into partial and consummate teachings is noted as a salient characteristic of Wōnhyo's classification method. Wōnhyo says that one-vehicle teaching can be differentiated according to whether it has the Universal Truth or not. Then, our concern may be directed to the question: what is the Universal Truth?

Since most of Wōnhyo's writings on *Avatamska* have been lost (except third volume of the *Commentary on Avatamska Sutra* and its preface), there is no way of looking into his view on the Universal Truth. However, very fortunately, a view of Wōnhyo was quoted in the *Questions and Answers on the Themes of Avatamska Sutra* written by Ven. P'yowōn of the Silla dynasty as following. Here it is said that the Universal Truth is

where all truths can be equal and mutually transmutable regardless of space (whether big or small), time (whether summarized or expounded), movement (whether dynamic or stationary) and amount (whether one or many). In the preface of Wōnhyo's *Commentary on Avatamska Sutra*, a similar passage can be found.

'Mutual equality and reciprocal transmutability' of everything is one of the salient aspects of the *Avatamska Sutra*. The Chinese studies on the text were concentrated on expounding its why. The Universal Truth of Wōnhyo also carries the similar line. According to what P'yowōn describes, Wōnhyo pointed out 10 reasons for the explanation. The sixth reason says "since the maximum and the minimum are of an equal amount." In his preface to the *Commentary on Avatamska Sutra*, similar expression is found. This view of Wōnhyo on 'big and small' does not differ at all from his description of the threefold greatness of the AF.

Then, we may safely say that the so-called Universal Truth in Wōnhyo's defining the consummate teaching of Ekayāna corresponds to the Three Greatness in Wōnhyo's thought of the AF.

IV. Comparison with Hua-yen School's Totality Co-origination Theory

Now, let us examine whether Wōnhyo's view on *Avatamska Sutra* is the same or not as Hua-yen School's theory of the totality co-origination. Even if Wōnhyo have assigned *Avatamska Sutra* to the consummate teaching of Ekayāna, his thought cannot be identified to the Hua-yen thought if his view differs from Hua-yen's theory of totality co-origination. From such a viewpoint, the writer attempted to expound on the question by quoting some detailed materials as have been quoted in the writings of P'yowōn or Kyunyō and the gleaned outcome is as follows.

- (1) Fivefold classification of texts . . . can

be understood in terms of the AF.

- (2) Parable of counting ten coins . . . adopted in the *Writings on the Universal Truth* and the *Summary of Avatamska Sutra* by Wōnhyo.
- (3) Ten esoteric co-originations . . . similar to Wōnhyo's Universal Truth.
- (4) Ten kinds of causes . . . similar to that of Wōnhyo.
- (5) View of totality . . . differs only on the surface from Wōnhyo's view on four totalities.
- (6) Universal flexibility of six aspects . . . Wōnhyo's view is rather similar to that of Ven. Ūisang, Hua-yen scholar of Silla dynasty.

From such analysis, the writer came to confirm that Wōnhyo's view on *Avatamska Sutra* corresponds, in substance, to Hua-yen School's theory of totality co-origination.

Though there are some minor differences in expression and structure, such can be seen quite often even in the writings of Hua-yen scholars.

If Wōnhyo's view on *Avatamska Sutra* is the same, in its content, as the Hua-yen School's totality co-origination theory, we may assert that his thought on the AF is equal to Hua-yen thought. However, one should refrain from asserting that Wōnhyo's thought is nothing but Hua-yen thought. It is because while Hua-yen School developed a labyrinthian structure of theories, concentratedly expounding *Avatamska Sutra*, Wōnhyo has accommodated all sutras, based on his thought on the AF, upholding his pursuit of "what is consistent throughout all sutras." Thus, we can say that Wōnhyo's view on *Avatamska* is distinguishing itself on this very score.

