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Wonhyo's Perspective on the Common Essence of Religions and Pluralistic Inclusivism*

Yong-pyo Kim

Abstract

The present article aims to re-illuminate the problem of religious pluralism in Buddhist traditions through investigating the philosophy of the Silla Master Wonhyo (607-76), and verifying the religious pluralistic implication that his theory of harmonization and reconciliation contains. The study clarified two questions. Firstly, how did Wonhyo understand the relationship between Buddhism and its neighboring religions? Secondly, how did Wonhyo understand the common foundation of all these religions? Buddhism has traditionally demonstrated its position of magnanimity and

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tolerance toward other religions or ideas. Wonhyo presented a pluralistic hermeneutics that reconciliates the arguments of truth of all the canons and the sects by inheriting Buddha's no-strife theory and the emptiness (sūnyatā) theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Wonhyo had a great interest in the different neighboring religions, and included non-Buddhists as well as Buddhist schools in the concept of the 'one vehicle.' He regarded all of the various different wholesome roots of the 'five vehicles' and non-Buddhist teachings as the 'one vehicle.' Wonhyo suggested a pluralistic stance centered on Buddha-nature as the common foundation or source of universal religion and all the saints' teachings. Because the "one-mind" that Wonhyo referred to as the body of the Buddha-nature is not a substantial reality, it must be understood as the religious experience of the return to original one-mind and mutually dynamic relations. Wonhyo proposed a holistic way of perception of truth to people who previously unfolded only one assertion or position. Wonhyo tried to solve this problem, through the insight into the origin of truth. This approach suggests an in-depth dialogical method with which to conduct dialogues between religions and ideologies.

Key words: Wonhyo, One-mind, Pluralistic Inclusivism,
Common Essence, Buddha-nature.

I. Introduction

The present study aims to clarify the basic foundation in Master Wonhyo's (元曉, 607-76) view on different religions and pluralistic inclusivism. There are two questions into which this treatise intends to inquire. Firstly, how did Wonhyo understand the relationship between Buddhism and its neighboring religions? Secondly, how did Wonhyo understand the common essence of all religions? Focusing on these themes, this study will try to search for fresh understanding of the religious pluralism and in-depth dialogue that Wonhyo's hermeneutic vision contains.

Buddhism has traditionally held a tolerant and comprehensive position towards different religions and philosophies. At the bottom of the Buddhist

ideas of harmonization and reconciliation there has been Sakyamuni Buddha's no-strife theory that does not get caught-up in any outside disputes. It means that the person who sees the reality of all dharmas as it is does not dispute with other people in the world. This no-strife philosophy has been unceasing throughout Buddhist history. Master Nāgārjuna (龍樹) illuminated the state free from all opinions and thoughts through the doctrine of emptiness (空, *sūnyatā*).

Wonhyo unfolded the hermeneutics of harmonization and reconciliation (和諍會通) by inheriting the Buddha's no-strife thought and the non-attachment theory of Prajñā wisdom. Many thinkers after Nāgārjuna presented various hermeneutic methods intending to make the true meaning of the Buddha's teachings clear, but there were many different opinions among them. Wonhyo saw that the correct understanding of Buddhist discourse was in utter confusion because of different arguments about the truth among the various Buddhist schools and the discourses on the scriptures that had unfolded ever since Sakyamuni Buddha's entering into nirvāṇa. Wonhyo realized that his mission in the history of philosophy was to show a new hermeneutic principle and method capable of tolerating all these many disputes.

Wonhyo's principle of harmonization and reconciliation (和會) can be applied to the modern discourse of religious pluralism as well as intramural Buddhist questions. In fact, Wonhyo had a great interest in the different neighboring religions, and included non-Buddhists as well as Buddhist schools in the concept of the 'one vehicle' (一乘). He regarded all of the various different wholesome roots of the 'five vehicles' (五乘) and non-Buddhist teachings as the 'one vehicle.'

This is because the dichotomies of unenlightened people and saints, Buddhist teachings and non-Buddhist philosophies all come from Buddha-nature and indiscriminately return to that origin. Wonhyo considered Buddha-nature the common base of all religions, and showed that all arguments about the truth can be reconciled through the religious experiences of returning to the origin of the one mind, which is the essence of the Buddha-nature. He thought that various religions teach different ways but each one has its own way of salvation, which can be seen from the 'one vehicle' viewpoint.

II. Wonhyo's View on Different Religions

Because the relevant materials that show Wonhyo's relation to other religions are rare, we cannot grasp the specifics. But by observing several circumstances shown in Wonhyo's biography, we can realize that a considerable amount of understanding of Confucianism and Daoism was accepted in Silla society at that time. Sung-bae Park, who first took notice of this problem, argues that Confucianism and Daoism are also included in Wonhyo's interests (Park, Sung-bae 2009, 26), and his theory of harmonizing disputes has a universal character which can be applied to all people as well as within Buddhism.

Wonhyo's discourse of reconciliation might also be seen as just a specific logic inside Buddhism, and be seen as an unreal sophistry. But observing it a little more closely and thinking a little bit deeply about it, we come to know that his logic has the universality which can be applied to all the people who were arguing together. In addition, in his theory trying to stop the disputes flashes the wisdom to which today's quarreling people cannot help listening. (Park, Sung-bae 2009, 89-90)

On the first part of Preceptor Seodang's memorial tower and monument (誓幢和上塔碑) in Goseon-sa Temple (高仙寺), which was built about 100 years after Wonhyo's entering nirvāṇa, there is a phrase which shows that Wonhyo studied various religious and philosophical books:

There was a small temple in the northwest of the kingdom's capital. [In this temple Wonhyo] [read] the books such as prophetic books (識記), □□ and apocrypha (外書) that [for ages] had been excluded from the world.¹ (Park, Sung-bae 2009, 23)

Through the interpretation of these lines on the epitaph, Sung-bae Park proved that Wonhyo was interested in other religions and thoughts with the following four reasons (Park, Sung-bae 2009, 24-27).

1 “王城西北 有一小寺 □識記□□外書等見斥於世□.” Sung-bae Park thought the four missing letters in this sentence to be those of ‘看, 雜文, 久’ in order.

Firstly, the above-mentioned phrase on the epitaph can be interpreted as an evidence that Wonhyo pored over the religious books of other religions outside Buddhism which had been disregarded by and excluded from the world at a small temple located in the northwest of the Kingdom Capital. The fact that Wonhyo read prophetic books, miscellaneous books, and apocrypha, shows that his concerns reached far and wide even outside of Buddhism. It is because, judging from Wonhyo's liberal thoughts and performances, he must not have been uninterested in the various religious cultures accepted at that time. The apocrypha mentioned here may have been mainly the books of Lǎozǐ (老子, Lao Tzu)'s Daoism or Confucian scriptures. From the phrases of all his works that are permeated with concepts similar to the *Dádéjīng* (道德經), we can easily guess that Wonhyo was greatly influenced by Laozi.² Secondly, it is considered that it was because Wonhyo considered harmonizing disputes as something beyond harmonizing right and wrong within Buddhist families, they inscribed the reason for the writing of the *Reconciliation of Disputes in Ten Aspects* after they enumerated Wonhyo's interests in other religions on the epitaph. Thirdly, in "Wonhyo jeon (Biography of Wonhyo)" included in *Sung kaosengchuan* (*The High Priests' Chronicles During the Sung Dynasty*; 宋高僧傳) written in the year 988 by Chinese Master Zanning (贊寧), it is recorded that Wonhyo was well-versed in the Three Teachings (三學) (T. 50, 730a-b).

It is thought that the three teachings Zanning mentions here indicate the traditional Oriental religions: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Fourthly, the phrases below the phrase "青藍共體" (blue and indigo plants are one body) can be interpreted as meaning that the object and range of harmonizing

² Wonhyo had profound knowledge of Daoism and Confucianism as well. The phrase on the Preceptor Seodang's tower-and-monument, '青藍共體 永水同源,' is similar to that of "青取之於藍而青於藍 冰水為之而寒於水" (the blue color comes from indigo plant but bluer than that, and ice is made from water but colder than that) in "the Chapter of Encouragement to Learning" of the *Xunzi*, and Zhuangzi's *Jiwulun* and Wonhyo's theory of harmonizing disputes is similar in method. We can see the Lao-Zhuang style and descriptive mode everywhere in Wonhyo's works.

ex.) "The nature of the Buddhist path is silent, empty, and profound, and clear, gentle, and deep, and thus deep and deep. How does it appear on the surface of all things? Being profound and profound, it contains the discourses of Hundred Schools...We mean to say that it 'exists,' but while constantly working, it is empty, and we intend to say that it is 'nothing,' but everything originates from utilizing it. We are forced to call it Dao (道) because we cannot know how to express it" (H. 1, 677). Regarding Wonhyo's and Lao-Zhuang's thought, refer to Choi (1998, 19-22); Kim, Hang-bae (2004, 151-62).

disputes include not only Buddhism but also all the differences of the world's religious philosophies.

The phrases of “青藍共體” and “水水同源” (ice and water have the same source) in the first part seems to mean that there is a reconciliatory aspect at the bottom of the phenomenal differences, and the next phrase “鏡納萬形” (a mirror reflects all forms) can be seen as an implicative principle which more positively embraces all the differences in the world, and the last one “水分通融” (water divides and passes through each other), as long as a missing letter is not found between “水分” and “通融,” for now, might be seen as informing a certain spiritual stage transcending right and wrong. (Park, Sung-bae 2009, 25-26)

Wonhyo did not make a concrete discussion on the relation between Buddhism and Confucianism or Daoism, but we can guess from the above-mentioned several circumstances that his interests aimed for the harmonization and reconciliation of all arguments about the truth including Buddhism's relationship with Confucianism and Daoism as well as the inner Buddhist arguments. This point of view is not being accepted in the whole academic world³, but this treatise regards it as considerably reasonable. This is because Wonhyo had the view on religion that “the immeasurable vehicle (無量乘) is the one vehicle (一乘), (‘謂無量乘皆是一乘故’) (Wonhyo, *Beophwa jongyo*: H. 1, 489a). His ultimate concern was to live a life which transcends even the boundaries of Buddhism and is perfectly free from all obstacles. In most of his books, Wonhyo emphasizes the religious experiences of returning to the one mind as the foundation for the reconciliation of the arguments within Buddhism about the truth. But if we take notice of the fact that the essence of the one mind transcends even the religion of Buddhism, we can see that this interpretation is fairly reasonable.⁴

In *Beophwa jongyo* (*Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra*; 法華宗要), we can find another example in which Wonhyo intended to understand both

3 Choi, You-jin thinks that the objects of Wonhyo's harmonizing disputes are the arguments between the various Buddhist theories, and do not contain those of other religions (Choi 1998, 19-22).

4 This hermeneutics of intention intends to make deep reverse-tracing of the author's various experiences and true intention in order to decipher the real meanings of the texts (Schleiermacher 1977).

Buddhism and other religions as the one truth. In the “Teaching that Conveys Believers to Liberation” (所乘法) of the *Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra*, Wonhyo regards the one vehicle (一乘) as the concept including the non-Buddhists such as Sāṃkya⁵ or Jainism⁶ as well as the three vehicles (三乘).

It is written in the “Chapter of One Vehicle” of the Nigaṇṭha Scripture (尼乾子經) that “the Buddha said to Mañjuśrī that I make all the non-Buddhists and the good sons such as Sāṃkya (僧伽) and Jainists (尼乾子) emerge into this world by Tathāgata’s mighty divine power. Though they have various different figures, they all must go across the bridge of Buddha-dharma because there is no other crossing.” (Wonhyo, *Beophwa jongyo*: H. 1, 489a)

In the “Marvelous Function” (妙用) section of the *Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra*, there is the discussion about whether to reconcile only the three vehicles into the one vehicle or to cover the vehicles of men and gods⁷ in such reconciliation, and Wonhyo includes even the vehicles of men and gods outside Buddhism in the objects of the reconciliation which intends to unite three into one (會三歸一). Here the vehicles of men and gods are the religions which teach the human way and heavenly way, and indicate the teachings that could not cover the original Buddhist practices.

Q: There are the vehicles of men and gods among the teachings of skillful means, and why are the two vehicles (二乘) not reconciled, but just the three vehicles (三乘) are reconciled?

5 The school of Sāṃkya is also translated as “數論派,” “僧法,” or “僧伽” in the Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures.

6 Jainism (nigaṇṭha-nātha-putta, nigaṇṭha-nāta-putta; 尼乾子) indicates the nigaṇṭha people whose origin is the nāta tribe or their religious orders. In addition, it is also the name of the Jain founder, Vardhamana, who was one founder of the six non-Buddhist schools at the time of the Buddha. It is also translated in the Chinese translation of the scriptures as “裸形外道” (shameless heretics), “露行外道” (wandering heretics), “尼乾陀” (Jainism; Nigaṇṭha), “尼乾陀若提子” (Nigaṇṭha-nāta-putta), “若提子” (nāta-putta), “尼乾陀弗達羅,” “尼乾爛徒子,” “離繫,” “無結,” “大薩遮尼乾,” and “大薩遮尼乾子.”

7 This is the religion which teaches people to be born in the world of human beings by accepting the five basic precepts and to be reborn in the heavenly realm by doing the ten positive commands. In a “Review of Lao-Zhuang’s Influences” (觀老莊影響論), Hanshan Deqing (憨山德清) established the classification theory of the five vehicles (五乘教判論), and among the human vehicle (人乘), the celestial vehicle (天乘), the śrāvaka vehicle (聲聞乘), the pratyekabuddha vehicle (緣覺乘) and the bodhisattva vehicle (菩薩乘), he regarded the human vehicle as the Confucian teaching of world-governing, and the celestial vehicle as Laozi’s teaching of world-forgetting (Hanshan 1998).

A: The statement that “we reconcile the three vehicles” means also the embracement of the two vehicles. We can find the two reasons in the teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* relevant to the three vehicles. The first is the parable of the three vehicles in the “Chapter of Parables,” and the second is the parable of the three herbs in the “Chapter of Medicinal Herbs.” What do they mean? Because we unite the two vehicles into the lesser vehicle, it is like a small herb (小藥草), and because we call the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha the middle vehicle (中乘), it is like a middle herb (中藥草), and because we regard the bodhisattvas who have aroused the aspiration for enlightenment through the Distinct Teaching (別教) as the greater vehicle, it is like a big herb (大藥草). To reconcile these three vehicles is to cover the five vehicles. But the human vehicle (人天) can reconcile the causes (因), but not the effects (果), for the effects are indeterminate and cannot make the causes of the one vehicle. Among those causes, good dharmas (善法) have two functions (功能). The function of the rewarding causes (報因, the causes of wholesome and unwholesome activities which receive the retribution of joys and sorrows) cannot be reconciled for it has an end. The function of receiving the same retribution as the causes (等流因用) like “good causes, good effects” (善因善果) and “bad causes, bad effects” (惡因惡果), is reconciled for it is given and has no end. By reconciling these meanings of causes (因義), I start the first phrase (第一句). (Wonhyo, *Beophwa jogyo*: H. 1, 492a)

Here Wonhyo interprets this problem with his unique logic of reconciling differences. The first is the point of view that it is possible to include the vehicles of men and gods (人天乘) in the one vehicle along with Buddhism. This is the view from the perspective of the ultimate spiritual stage of reconciliation and the religious view of pluralism⁸ that acknowledges every religious teaching as it is. The second is the viewpoint that some vehicles of men and gods can enter the one vehicle, but there are also inappropriate elements. This standpoint is the so-called religious interpretation of inclusivism⁹.

8 In the philosophy of religion, the term of pluralism indicates the theory which has the thought that each religion equally has its own way of salvation. Or this is the theory that the religious truth exists not in only one religion but pluralistically.

9 This religious inclusivism is different from exclusivism in that it has the tolerant attitude of understanding other religions, but it is also a kind of exclusivism in the way that it does not abandon the finality and the conclusive salvational logic of its own religion. But the inclusivism is being regarded as a preliminary theory towards the religious pluralism and is judged to be an advanced theory for the dialogue and cooperation between religions.

The religious inclusivism is the position that argues the superiority and the ultimate salvation of its own religion and also recognizes partially the truth and salvational possibility of other religions. It does not exclude other religions for it understands that its own religion contains the truth of other religions. In other words, it agrees in part on the value and the usefulness of other religions from the standpoint of self-superiority. Wonhyo thought that the vehicles of men and gods had the partial truth which can lead to the one vehicle. That is because men and gods (人天) can reconcile the causes (因), but cannot reconcile the effects (果). But instead of excluding men and gods, he wanted to understand them as a part of the one vehicle. This inclusive standpoint of Wonhyo's appeared also as Buddhist supremacy in the *Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (大慧度經宗要).

Even though the Emperors Yao and Shun (堯舜) ruled all the world, and the Duke of Zhou (周公) and Confucius were the leaders of all the good men, they could not dare to go against Heaven's law when all the divine heroes were giving their teachings. Now all the heavenly beings look up to our Dharma King's true scriptures of prajñā and do not dare to break the Buddha's teachings. Judging from this, there is a very long distance between their teachings and the Buddha's. How can we discuss all of them on the same day?¹⁰ (Wonhyo, *Daehyedogyong jongyo*: H. 1, 480b)

Outwardly Wonhyo sees other religions from the standpoint of inclusivism, but internally he embraces them from the perspective of pluralism. Wonhyo's view of other religions, so to speak, was that of "pluralistic inclusivism" which encompassed the pluralism of the one vehicle and the discriminative inclusivism. Ultimately, all the religions are included in the one vehicle. But because he was able to find some points in them unequal to the one vehicle through the concrete analysis of their contents, he tried to receive those points into the pluralistic system. He intends to partially accept other arguments of truth at the level of the One Mind. Likewise, Wonhyo shows the unique method of "pluralistic inclusivism" with which he tries an

10 至如唐虞之 蓋天下周孔之冠群仙 而猶諸天設教 不敢逆於天則 今我法王波若真典 諸天奉而仰信不敢 違於佛教 以此而推 去彼遠矣 豈可同日而論乎哉。

reconciliatory dialogue through accepting other religions' arguments about the truth within the great enlightenment of the one mind.

III. The Common Essence and Denominator of Religions

A. Buddha-nature as the Foundation of All Kinds of Religiosity

Pluralistic religious discourses which attempt to understand all the religions as having one essential doctrine or meaning have been attempted by many religious thinkers. The religious pluralists' viewpoints are various at the level of arguments, but they all start with the hypothesis that the world's religions have a common foundation to be shared. It is said that "When getting in-depth overviews, we can see that all religions are the same and that different paths orient toward the same goal" (Knitter 1985, 37).

The common religious foundation can be explained in various ways. The first is the theory of ontological common foundation that there exists just one ultimate reality.¹¹ The second is the theory of ethical common foundation that there is commonality in the ethics which various religions teach. Although each religion has a different doctrinal basis, all the religions suggest the universal good and cosmic love.¹² The third is the theory of the common foundation through religious experiences that we can find a religious meeting point from deep religious experiences. The mention that "saints' minds are not two (聖人無兩心)"¹³ can be thought to have this meaning. Mystics think that the world religions can find the common ground in a deep level through the experiences of union with the ultimate reality.

Can we find this religious common foundation in Wonhyo's thought? Looking at all the arguments about the truth, Wonhyo thought that they saw

11 It is said that reality is called different names but originates from the one thing. John Hick's argument is a representative example.

12 Comparing the moral laws which the world religions teach, we can find that the common Global Ethos is immanent in them. For example, we can find the precepts of not killing, not stealing, no debauchery, no false speech among the five Buddhist precepts, also in most of religious ethics (Kim, Yong-pyo 2010, 280-307).

13 "There cannot be two truths in the world, and saints' minds are not two, either (天下無二道 聖人無兩心)." The preface of 無碍 鄭興德與 in the *Protection of Dharma* (護法論) by Jang, Sang-yeong (Hamheo and Jang 1988, 71).

only one side of the truth. He means that Buddha-nature is the common foundation of all the religious wholesome roots to those who have the wisdom to see through the source of the religious truth. In the following quotation, Wonhyo says that Buddhist-nature is the very basis of the five religions (五乘).

You ought to understand this. According to Buddha Dharma, all the wholesome roots of the five vehicles and non-Buddhists' various different wholesome roots are the one vehicle; they came from Buddha-nature and there is not any other basis than that.¹⁴

(Wonhyo, *Beophwa jongyo*: H. 1, 489a).

Although Wonhyo cites the Nigaṇṭha scripture, he makes an important argument that all the wholesome roots of the five vehicles came from Buddha-nature. In other words, he suggests “pluralism centered on Buddha-nature,” in which Buddha-nature is the source of all existences and religiosity. In addition to this, Wonhyo even says that the teachings of all religions and thoughts as well as unenlightened people and saints, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, are the one vehicle.

What do we call the essence of Dharma? There are, so to speak, not two essences, for all of the immeasurable vehicles are the one vehicle.¹⁵ (Wonhyo, *Beophwa jongyo*: H. 1, 489a)

From this context, there can be the interpretation that all religions and thoughts come within the category of the “one vehicle” which Wonhyo mentioned. That is because the one vehicle is infinite so it is the spiritual stage having no limit and boundary.

For this reason, I can say that because all the wholesome roots of unenlightened people, saints, all living beings, Buddhists, and non-Buddhists originate from Buddha-nature and return to the source together, only the Buddha knows deeply the beginning-and-end. They are vast and very profound in this sense, and we call them the one vehicle cause (一乘因).¹⁶ (Wonhyo, *Beophwa jongyo*: H 1, 489a)

14 當知 佛法五乘 諸善及與外道 種種異善 如是一切皆是一乘 皆依佛性無異體故。

15 云何體法者 謂理無二體 無二體者 謂無量乘皆是一乘故。

All the wholesome roots of saints, living beings, Buddhists, and other religious people come from Buddha-nature and return to the original source together. Wonhyo says that only an enlightened person can know the beginning-and-end of the true image of such causes-and-conditions. Like this, he preaches that Buddha-nature as the common foundation of all religions has a very profound meaning and we can understand the deeper meaning of the one vehicle through it. (H. 1, 489a)

This pluralistic religious viewpoint of Wonhyo reminds us of the following phrase in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

Regardless of how people approach me, I accept them.

Because regardless of what paths they chose, all the paths are mine.¹⁷

Any path ends up becoming the path leading to the one vehicle. The paths of all religions are finally pointing in the direction towards the one vehicle as the one single truth. Wonhyo stated clearly that followers of the non-Buddhist teachings as well as Buddhism are beings having Buddha-nature, and that the very Buddha-nature is the basis of various religions. Various religions mentioned here mean a concept that includes Indian non-Buddhist teachings, Confucianism, Daoism and Silla people's faith in the celestials which Wonhyo was familiar with. But broadly speaking, it might contain various modern world religions. This is because all living beings have Buddha-nature, and because all the wholesome roots, which belong to the one vehicle, rely on Buddha-nature (Wonhyo, *Beophwa jongyo*: H. 1, 489a).

From the position of other religions, it must be regarded as Buddhist-centered inclusivism to think that Buddha-nature lies in the basis of all living beings and religious people. But the view that all of the infinite teachings as well as unenlightened people and saints, Buddhism and

16 由是言之 若凡若聖一切衆生內道外道一切善根 皆出佛性同歸本原 如是本來唯佛所窮 以是義故廣大甚深 如是名爲一乘因也。

17 *Bhagavad-Gītā* IV-11: "ye yathā mānī prapadyante, tānīs tath'aiva bhajāmy aham; mama va-rtm'ānuvartante manuṣyāh, Pārtha, sarvaśah (In whatsoever they may [devoted] men approach Me, in that same way do I return their love. [Whatever their occupation and] whatever they may be, men follow in my footsteps)" (Zaehner 1969, 185-86; Gil 1988, 77); See Hick and Hebblethwaite (1980, 190).

non-Buddhist teachings are the one vehicle, is said to be not simple inclusivism but “pluralistic inclusivism,” which opened the prospect of “pluralistic inclusivism.” We need to pay attention to the fact that Wonhyo’s pluralistic inclusivism is different in character from the inclusive thoughts of other religions. Religious inclusivism has been the traditional position of Asian religions including Hinduism besides Buddhism, but recently progressive theologians including Catholics suggest this inclusive theory. Karl Rahner (1904-84)¹⁸ raised the argument of Christian inclusivism that Christians should look upon a person who accepts divine blessing and lives a life of practicing love without knowing Christian teachings, as a “anonymous Christian.”¹⁹ He states that whoever searches for the truth and practices what his or her own moral conscience demands is, in fact, a Christian. This means that even though he is not a Christian but an atheist from the human perspective, but he is considered as a Christian from God’s standpoint.²⁰

Karl Rahner’s such thought reminds us of Wonhyo’s saying that “the basis of all religions is Buddha-nature.” Because all the wholesome roots of all the non-Buddhists as well as Buddhist’s are the one vehicle and they are based on Buddha-nature, they can be also regarded as Buddhists of the one vehicle. But there is a great difference in the view of the ultimate reality and in each one’s attitude toward arguments about the truth between Wonhyo’s inclusivism and Rahner’s, which stands on the logic that cannot in itself deconstruct the absoluteness of Christianity and stubborn arguments about the truth regarding the existence of God. But Wonhyo’s inclusivism attempts to

18 Catholic activist of church unity movement. He played an active role as an advisor in Vatican Council II (October 1962-December 1965). He urged the importance of a dialogue and an exchange with not only Christian sects but also other religious thoughts.

19 “The ‘anonymous Christian’ in our sense of the term is the pagan after the beginning of the Christian mission, *who lives in the state of Christ’s grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ.*” Although the term “anonymous Christian” was not explicitly adopted in Vatican Council II, this concept is contained especially in the *Lumen Gentium* (the doctrinal chart of Church) (Rahner 1976, 283).

20 Karl Rahner’s concept of “anonymous Christian” reflects the inclusive theology thought which was developed with the two axes of human transcendental nature and divine universal willing of salvation at the center. It is said that it is meaningless to discriminate between baptized Christians and non-Christians for the divine universal willing of salvation is applied to all human beings. This means that anyone who is equipped with Christian elements is regarded as the “anonymous Christian” for all men are already made sacred through divine blessing without any distinction (Rahner 1980; Mun 2003).

solve the problem of arguments about the truth by dissolving the concept of the truth itself, the one mind. On the one hand, Wonhyo mentions Buddha-nature and the one mind as the common foundation of religions, but on the other, he emphasizes repeatedly that one must not be caught in the concept of the one mind. He says that the one mind is not the absolute truth for it is beyond language and thinking. The one mind is not two but at the same time it cannot be called one, and it is something different but at the same time it can be called one. When we understand this not-two character of the one mind, we can grasp the characteristic of Wonhyo's pluralistic inclusivism.

B. The Empirical Origin of the One Mind and Pluralistic Inclusivism

Master Wonhyo's diverse logics of harmonizing disputes were the principle of the interpretation of the Buddha's sermon, which was illuminated from the spiritual stage of the one mind that he had experienced. Therefore, his reconciliatory hermeneutics has true meaning only for the one who experienced the fountainhead of the one mind. All arguments about the truth are dissolved into one taste from the spiritual stage of the true thusness of the one mind (一心眞如) or the intrinsic enlightenment of the one mind (一心本覺). One taste does not mean opposition but harmony and reconciliation. This point is the focus of Wonhyo's hermeneutics. Without keeping this focus in mind, only analysing and understanding many logics of harmonizing disputes does not lead one to the real solution of many problems. Although the one taste of the one mind blends two, it is the world that is not one thing. The reconciliatory hermeneutics is the hermeneutics of the truth of the one who awakens to the reality of all dharmas.

Wonhyo regarded the essence of Buddha-nature as the one mind. As the common basis of a religion the one mind is the fundamental essence of Buddha-nature. Thus, pluralistic idea centered on Buddha-nature that the wholesome roots of all religions and philosophies came from Buddha-nature, can be understood in the same context as the pluralism centered on the one

mind. Regarding many different designations appearing in many Buddhist scriptures, he considered all of them as the different expressions of the Buddha-nature of thusness, whose self-nature is pure.

Since the three vehicles return to one thing, it is named the “one vehicle”; since it is the basis of the twelve causes-and-conditions it is named as “causes-and-conditions”; since it gets out of everything, it is named “emptiness”; since there is intrinsic enlightenment in human nature, it is named “wisdom”; since it is true among sentient beings, it is named “true meaning”; and since it illuminates itself, it is named “self-view.” Although these many names are different, their essences are the same. The reason for presenting various names like this is to suggest that the teachings of many scriptures have only one taste. So-called naming “self-view” and “Tathagata’s womb” intends to reconcile and unite the teachings of the *Śrīmālā-sūtra*, the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, etc. into pervasive understanding; naming “emptiness” and “wisdom” intends to reconcile and unite the teachings of many scriptures that deliver the first teaching of emptiness into pervasive understanding; naming the “one vehicle” intends to reconcile and unite the teachings of the *Lotus-sūtra*, etc. into pervasive understanding; and naming “genuine liberation” intends to reconcile and unite the teachings of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*, etc. into pervasive understanding. Because these many scriptures intend to show the same meaning in spite of different phrases, these many names, which are originated from one Buddha-nature, are given.²¹ (Wonhyo, *Yeolban jongyo*: H. 1, 544c-45a)

In this context, Wonhyo used the term “one mind” together with “Buddha-nature” or “Tathagata’s womb,” but he frequently used the “one mind” in a more comprehensive sense.

The essence of Buddha-nature is the one mind. The nature of the one mind gets away from all surroundings. Because it takes distance for all surroundings, there is nothing that it applies to. Because there is nothing that it applies to, there is nothing that it does not apply to.²² (Wonhyo, *Yeolban jongyo*: H. 1, 538b-c).

21 如是等文 舉諸異名 同顯性淨真如佛性 三乘同歸 故名一乘 十二之本 故名因緣 離一切故名爲空 性有本覺 名爲智慧 衆生中實 故名爲實義 自體自照 故名我見 諸名雖異 所證體一 所以說是衆多名者 爲顯諸經唯一味故 謂名我見 名如來藏者 是會勝鬘楞伽等旨 又名爲空 名智慧者 是會諸部般若教意 又名一乘者是會法花經等 又名真解脫者 是會維摩經等 爲顯是等諸經異文同旨 故於一佛性 立是諸名也。

In the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (大乘起信論), it is emphasized that all perceptual objects including arising-and-ceasing aspect (生滅門) and the aspect of thusness (眞如門) are included in the one mind. Because the one mind is the source of all dharmas and it is something all dharmas rely on, it becomes the basis of all dharmas (Wonhyo, *Geumgangsammaeyeong ron*: H. 1, 615c). One Dharma Realm is the very one mind, and there are no other Dharmas than the one mind. Every objective world and perceptual objects end up returning to the one mind. The one mind that includes everything is equipped with everything. Like the grains of sand in the river Ganges, it is equipped with both all clean virtues and all impure Dharmas (Wonhyo, *Geumgangsammaeyeong ron*: H 1, 615c). Likewise, the one mind is a concept which includes everything. Therefore, Wonhyo unfolded his philosophy with the one mind at its center.

Then, let's compare Wonhyo's religious idea with the pluralism centered on reality proposed by John Hick (1922–2012), a modern religious pluralistic thinker, who claims a hypothesis that the “one reality” exists as a common basis of a religion. John Hick suggested a new viewpoint of religion, saying that the great religions in the world are diverse manifestations of the one ultimate reality. Then, he proposed a great Copernican change in the traditional understanding of religion.

The great world religions are different human responses to the one divine reality, embodying different perceptions which have been formed in different historical and cultural circumstances. (Hick 1980, 82)

John Hick thinks that because divine reality is boundless it goes beyond the realm of human thinking, language and experience, but that it reacts to human nature in possible restricted way, reveals its shape in front of a human being, and allows a human being's encounter with itself through conceptualization. Although the aspects of the divine reality are diverse, he thinks that it is a common basis of the great world religions.²³ Then,

22 佛性之體正是一心 一心之性遠離諸邊 遠離諸邊故都無所當 無所當故無所不當.

23 This “one reality” is experienced as personal existence in the flow of life in theistic religions; it is

regarding the question of “Why do world religions take various forms?” he thinks that the differences between religions happen because human concepts and consciousness formed in each diverse historical, cultural context.

On the contrary, Wonhyo said that although the principle of the world is one, it is not always the same. Dharma gates are as diverse as occasion demands, so that there can be other ways than one way. Thus, he meant that everything is reasonable according to each differing context.

Because it is not one, it applies to every part,
and because it is not a different thing, all gates taste the same.²⁴
(Wonhyo, *Yeolban jongyo*: H. 1, 525c)

John Hick’s viewpoint of religion that there is one common reality within the religions in the world set out its logical argument in connection with the concept of metaphysical reality.²⁵ On the contrary, the essential characteristic of Wonhyo’s one mind can be grasped only on the level of religious experience rather than ontological sense. That is because the one mind is not a fixed substance but the spiritual stage of the ultimate enlightenment which all sentient beings should reach. The ultimate directing point of all sermons preached by the Buddha consists in making deceived human beings return to the fountainhead of the one mind. The spiritual stage of the Buddha is the very spiritual stage of the mind having returned to the fountainhead of the one mind. Therefore, seeing the one mind as a certain substance is a misconception in the same way that one is confused by seeing

experienced as infinite existence-consciousness-blessing (sat-cit-ananda) in Hinduism; and it can be experienced as cosmic Buddha-nature in Buddhism. Likewise, there is one reality behind all religions. This ultimate reality is the final concern of all religious people.

24 由非一故 能當諸門 由非異故 諸門一味.

25 John Hick interprets the ultimate reality of many religions through dividing the Real an sich of Kant’s transcendental rationalism and empirical reality perceived by a human being variously. For example: ① Hinduism: Nirguna Brahman (God beyond man’s concept) → Saguna Brahman, ② Buddhism: Dharmakaya, Eternal Buddha-nature → Sambhogakaya, Upaya Dharmakaya, ③ Daoism: Eternal Tao → Expressible Tao, ④ Judaism: ④ Kabbala Mysticism—Ein-sof → ten kinds of Sefirot ⑤ Maimonides-essence → Manifestation of God ⑤ Islam: Al Haqq → Divinity immanent in Allah’s self-revelation, ⑥ Christianity: ⑥ Meister Eckhart —Godhead→God ⑥ Paul Tillich—God above God in theism → God in theism ⑥ Gordon Kaufman—the Real God (cannot be known by word) → identifiable useful God (Fundamentally it is a product of spiritual imagination), ⑦ Process theology (A. N. Whitehead): God’s initial nature → God’s inevitable nature (Hick 1989, 236-37).

a heat haze as water. As a result, Wonhyo repeatedly warned of absolutizing the one mind or substantializing it. The one mind is a different designation of the Buddha's enlightenment itself. As enlightenment cannot be expressed in words, so cannot the one mind.

Although it is already not two, how can there be one? Although there is not one thing, what can we call as the mind? Since this principle leaves remarks and goes beyond thoughts, I did not know how to point it out and forced myself to call it as the one mind.²⁶ (Wonhyo, *Daeseunggisillon so*: H. 1, 741a-b).

The nature of the one mind is apart from all dualistic discriminations. The essence of the one mind is clean and at the same time is dyed; it is movable and at the same time tranquil; and it is not a special thing and at the same time not one thing. Such non-duality of the one mind becomes a dynamic force which excellently unites different arguments about the truth.

Seen from the one mind away from all discriminations inside Buddhism, all Dharma sermons and arguments about the truth cannot help being dissolved within the one taste of enlightenment (一覺味), the fountainhead of the Tathagata's equal and indiscriminate one mind. Therefore, seen from Wonhyo's standpoint, the fundamental solution of the conflicts between religions or between ideologies lie in the experience of being unified into the fountainhead of the one mind (歸一心源).²⁷ The very religious experience to return to the source of the one mind becomes a driving force that can ultimately reconcile all conflicting opinions.

Here is contained the principle that can not only reconcile different arguments about the truth within Buddhism but also solve the opposition and conflict between religions and philosophies. The spiritual stage of "one taste," in which one sees reality as it is, can be understood as universal religiosity

26 然既無有二 何得有一 一無所有 就誰曰心 如是道理 離言絕慮 不知何以目之 強號爲一心也。

27 "Wonhyo's attitude to differentiate and acknowledge some truth in every opinion came from the viewpoint of a human being, in which man's incessant efforts to awaken to the truth are considered as the process of initial enlightenment (始覺) on the basis of original enlightenment (本覺). If non-Buddhists' attempts are also the efforts to embody the truth and their fruits, they should be looked upon as the trace and expression of initial enlightenment" (Park, Tae-weon 2004, 35-36).

which all human beings aim for. The attempt to view Wonhyo's idea of the one mind as the principle of embodying "the universal religiosity inherent in human beings," will be a research field which should be further treated in the future.²⁸

IV. Conclusion

The Buddha treated various arguments about the truth with wisdom based on dependent-arising and tolerant compassion. Buddhist tolerance and magnanimity towards neighboring religions and philosophies were manifested for the first time in the Buddha's idea of no-strife, and in the Mahayana idea of emptiness (空, *sūnyatā*), which shows a stance of no attachment to the truth and the transcendence of all opinions. Wonhyo developed this tradition of Buddhism, suggesting the pluralistic method for reconciling all of the scriptures and the diversities of the various Buddhist schools' arguments about the truth.

In Wonhyo's principle of harmonizing and reconciling disputes are contained not only the harmonization and reconciliation of different arguments about the truth within Buddhism but also a principle that can also solve opposition and conflict between religions and philosophies. Wonhyo was also not only very much interested in many Buddhist scriptures and treatises and many Buddhist schools but also in neighboring religions. Wonhyo lived in an era of religious pluralism, in which folk religions (including faith in the gods of Heaven), Confucianism and Daoism coexisted. The fact that he was also greatly influenced by Confucianism and Daoism is found on all sides of his works. Although there are not many cases in which he expressed his viewpoints regarding other religions directly, his attempt to explain the one vehicle of Buddhism in which he included other non-Buddhists enables us to

28 Not only the idea of consciousness-only in Buddhism but also Plato's epistemology, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327, a mystic thinker of the Middle Ages), and modern religious psychologists such as Carl G. Jung, William James, Roberto Assagioli and the others sympathize with the theory that a common psychological origin lies in the archetypes of all religious spirits. It can be said that such stance not only gives deep implications for religious anthropology which tries to see a human being as a religious human being (*homo religiosus*), but also provides great help to an attempt to discover common religiosity in the field of religious education (Kim, Yong-pyo 1995).

recognize his appearance as a pluralistic religious thinker.

Religious Pluralists think that a common foundation lies beneath the world's religions. That common foundation is explained in many dimensions. Wonhyo suggested a pluralistic stance centered on Buddha-nature, from which he looked upon Buddha-nature and the one mind as the common foundation which becomes the source of all saints' teaching including the two vehicles, the religion of human beings and heavenly beings. Since the one mind which Wonhyo considered as the essence of Buddha-nature is not a substantial existentialism, one should perceive it in mutual dynamic relation with religious experiences which make one return to the source of the one mind. That is because even the variegated logics of harmonizing disputes between religions that Wonhyo unfolded are, in fact, the logics that he surveyed from the spiritual stage of the one mind he had experienced.

Seen from the dimension of the one mind, arguments of diverse religions about the truth are different understandings about the one truth. That is to say, because of different historical and cultural situations, this one mind is just expressed in different concepts. Wonhyo's open hermeneutics, which acknowledges diversity and difference, was the way of reconciliation regarding arguments about the truth; and it was a dialogic hermeneutics. Therefore, Wonhyo's logic for harmonizing disputes can be applied to the issue of an understanding between religions. He suggested a method for the overall recognition of the truth to those who made only one assertion or suggested only one position. He thought one should not assert that only one's own religion or theory is right, but that one should have open mind through which one acknowledges the other's assertions or difference between them. One who sees the reality of every dharma as it is escapes from narrow arguments about the truth, and does not become a slave who is trapped into the absolutization of the truth.

Glossary

(S=Sanskrit, C=Chinese, K=Korean)

Apocrypha 外書

Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith 大乘起信論

Beophwa jongyo (K) Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra; 法華宗要

Blue and indigo plants are one body 青藍共體

Dádédjīng (C) 道德經

Duke of Zhou (C) 周公

Essence 體

Five vehicles 五乘

Goseon-sa Temple (K) 高仙寺

Harmonization and reconciliation 和諍會通

Ice and water have the same source 氷水同源

Immeasurable vehicle 無量乘

Intrinsic enlightenment of the one mind 一心本覺

Jainists (S) 尼乾子

Laozi (Lao Tzu) (C) 老子

Marvelous Function 妙用

Nāgārjuna (S) 龍樹

Nigaṇṭha Scripture (S) 尼乾子經

One vehicle 一乘

Prophetic books 識記

Reconciliation which intends to unite three into one 會三歸一

Saints' minds are not two 聖人無兩心

Sāṃkya (S) 數論派 (僧伽)

Seodang's memorial tower and monument 誓幢和上塔碑

Sung kaosengchuan (C) 宋高僧傳

Śūnyatā (S) 空

Three Teachings 三學

Wonhyo (K) 元曉

Yao and Shun (C) 堯舜

Zanning (C) 贊寧

Abbreviations

- H* *Hanguk Bulgyo Jeonseo* (韓國佛教全書, Collected works of Korean Buddhism) [followed by volume, page, and horizontal column]. Seoul: Dongguk Univ. Press, 1977–2004.
- T* *Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo* (大正新脩大藏經, Japanese edition of the Buddhist Canon) [followed by volume, page, and horizontal column]. (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–35)

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- Geumgangsammaeyeong ron* 金剛三昧經論 [Commentary on the *Vajrasamādhī-sūtra*]. H. 1.
- Muryangsugyeong jongyo* 無量壽經宗要 [Essentials of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*]. H. 1.
- Yeolban jongyo* 涅槃宗要 [Essentials of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*]. H. 1.
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