



Faith and the Resolution of the Four Doubts in Wonhyo's Doctrinal Essentials of the Sutra of Immeasurable Life (Muryangsu-gyeong-jong-yo)

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Faith and the Resolution of the Four Doubts in Wonhyo's *Doctrinal Essentials of the Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* (*Muryangsu-gyeong-jong-yo*)

Charles Muller

Among the numerous distinctive aspects of the work of the noted Korean scholar-monk Wonhyo is the broad range of traditions and texts that he accorded treatment - along with the unusual level of fairness and seriousness he brought to such works - an indication of his lack of sectarian bias. Another distinctive aspect of his work as an exegete is the extent to which his "religious" attitude - his concern for the nurturance of the faith in the minds of his readers inevitably rises to the forefront of his works. Thus, what he has to say about the idea of "faith" 信 in the context of a Pure Land work is a matter of considerable interest.

On the other hand, given the way that the Pure Land tradition is currently perceived by its modern adherents, one might be given to assume

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that the notion of “faith in other-power” constitutes the backbone of the arguments made in seminal Pure Land scriptures such as the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* (Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha*; K. *Muryangsu-gyeong*, C. *Wu-liang-shou-jing*). This paper shows, based on Wonhyo’s analysis, how in fact the main form of faith expounded by the *sūtra* is something much more like that seen articulated in mainstream *Yogācāra* and *Tathāgatagarbha* texts. The paper also shows how Wonhyo uses *Yogācāra*-based hermeneutics to unravel the conundrum of the four kinds of cognition dropped, without explanation in the final lines of the *sūtra*.

Key Words: Faith, Pure Land, Wonhyo, Yogacara, Tathagatagarbha.

I. Introduction: the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* as *Yogācāra* Text

Wonhyo (617-686) is known in East Asia for a number of especially insightful and influential commentarial works, with the best-known being his commentaries on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna* Faith and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. Another area in which Wonhyo made a major contribution was that of Pure Land, where he wrote definitive commentaries on both the larger and smaller *Sukhāvati-vyūha* (or *Amitābha Sūtra* and *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*). Spurred by a question put to me on the role of “faith in other-power” in Wonhyo, I ventured into a study of the larger *sūtra* along with Wonhyo’s commentary on it (*Muryangsu gyeong jong-yo*; “Doctrinal Essentials of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*”) based on the fact the this *sūtra* is one of the most originary and seminal “other-power” Buddhist texts. It is a *locus classicus* for the famous eighteenth and nineteenth vows of Amitabha, in which he promises Pure Land rebirth to those who chant his name.

In the course of studying Wonhyo’s exegesis alongside the source *sūtra*, a number of interesting points become apparent. The first thing that came to my notice was the fact that the exegesis actually has very

little to say about “other power” in an overt manner (although there is room to claim that it is inferred in various places, depending upon one’s interpretation). Nor does Wonhyo have a great deal to say about faith in Amitābha. We need not adduce any special implication to these observations at the moment, since it might yet be argued, after a full and thoughtful reading of the text, that Wonhyo does not deliberately ignore, or lightly regard such issues. Nevertheless, we should acknowledge that the sūtra itself, aside from the section on the forty-eight vows and its verses of praise also tends to deal with the matter of faith from through a decidedly Abhidharma/Yogācāra approach, which is of course Wonhyo’s primary hermeneutical background. Hence, what we tend to see in this commentary is another display of Wonhyo’s characteristic mode of exegetical discourse, which is his own personal admixture of Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha-based interpretation, deeply imbued by his strong faith-based orientation. In short, it is a mode of exegesis similar to that seen at work in his commentaries on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, the *Doctrinal Essentials of the Niroāṇa Sūtra*, and so forth.

That the sūtra should end up being subjected to a treatment from a Yogācāra-Tathāgatagarbha perspective should certainly not be regarded as an unnatural or foreign imposition. For, as noted above, if we pay careful attention to the content of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*, aside from its early sections that describe the Pure Land, and its lists of vows and verses of praise, most of its explanatory content could just as well be lifted right out of a standard Yogācāra or Tathāgatagarbha - or even Abhidharma classic, as the fundamental concepts at work are all the same as those used in the basic Indian discourse on the nature of consciousness, affliction, and the paths of correction leading to liberation. What differs in this case is that there is a special emphasis on such concepts related to descriptions of the Pure Land and rebirth therein, such as notions of buddha-bodies. Discussions of reward/response bodies are central to the text, as are the categories of

the three classes of beings 三聚,¹ which are also ubiquitous in Abhidharma, Yogācāra, and Tathāgatagarbha works. Hence it should not be seen as odd that Wonhyo should select these topics (about which he knows much, and about which he has much to say) as the foci of his discussion.

II. Faith Presented in the Sūtra

The notion of faith is approached in the commentary from a variety of perspectives, with its exact connotations varying according to the context. Indeed, it is the very complexity of Wonhyo's treatment of faith that makes this exposition so interesting. As Ken Tanaka pointed out in a recent paper, Wonhyo's explanation of faith in this work is deeply informed by structure of faith that he brings from his favorite Tathāgatagarbha works such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* [AMF].² While I think Tanaka is generally correct here, I would like to develop the analysis of the discussion of faith in a bit broader manner, by showing other types of faith discourse that can be identified.

It might be easiest to initiate a discussion of the notion of faith in this commentary by noting some of the passages where there is an overt usage of the term *sin* 信 itself, which are relatively few in number. One such place is in the section where the numbers of necessary recitations of the Buddha's name for practitioners of lesser capacities³ (ranging between one and ten) are distinguished in terms of

1 The three classes of beings are the correctly determined 正定聚, wrongly determined 邪定聚 and indeterminate 不定聚.

2 In rendering the title of the *Da-sheng-qi-xin-lun* as *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, as opposed to Hakeda's "Awakening of Faith in Mahayana" I am following the position put forth by Sung Bae Park in Chapter Four of his book *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*. There he argues that the inner discourse of the text itself, along with the basic understanding of the meaning of *mahāyāna* in the East Asian Buddhist tradition does not work according to a Western theological "faith in ..." subject-object construction, but according to an indigenous East Asian essence-function 體用 model. Thus, *mahāyāna* should not be interpreted as a noun-object, but as a modifier, which characterizes the *type* of faith.

relative shallowness and depth of faith.

Among the practitioners of inferior capacity there are two kinds of people, each of which has three additional characteristics. The three of the first type are: (1) Assuming an inability to generate [sufficient] merit, they give rise to the mind of perfect enlightenment. This is the case of direct causation. (2) One concentrates one's mind on the Buddha for up to ten recitations. This is the case of auxiliary full-capacity karma. (3) Vowing to be born in his land. This vow combines with prior practices to serve as cause. This is the case of persons of indeterminate nature. The three of the second type are: (1) Hearing the profound dharma, one has joyous confidence. This item also expresses the case of direct causes [producing] the mind determined for enlightenment. (2) One concentrates one's mind on the Buddha for up to one recitation. This is the case of auxiliary full-capacity karma. This is in contrast to the situation of the prior person, who, lacking deep faith, needed ten recitations. Since this person has deep faith, it is not necessary to do the full ten recitations. (3) With a fully sincere mind, one vows to be reborn in that land. This vow combines with prior practices to serve as cause, and this is from the vantage point of the person with the nature determined for bodhisattvahood.⁴

The term faith also tends to appear, as Tanaka leads us to notice, in connection with the citation - direct or indirect, of a Tathāgatagarbha text - most often the *AMF*. However, if we tried to understand the attitude taken toward faith in a Wonhyo commentary (and probably in

3 Interestingly, faith is not even mentioned in the immediately antecedent discussion of the practice and attainments of the practitioners of superior and middling capacities.

4 下輩之內。說二種人。二人之中。各有三句。初人三者。一者。假使不能作諸功德。當發無上菩提之心。是明正因。二者。乃至十念。專念彼佛。是助滿業。三者願生彼國。此願前行和合爲法。歡喜信樂。此句兼顯發心正因。但爲異前人舉是助滿業。爲故。必須十念。此人有深信故。未必具足十念。三者。以至誠心。願生彼國。此願前行和合爲因。此就菩薩種性人也。(T.37.128b20-28)

most other Buddhist texts) only by looking at overt appearances of the term *sin* itself, we would be leaving ourselves open to the danger of missing the most significant portions of Wonhyo's argument, intended to arouse faith in the mind of the reader - most of which occur without mention of the term *sin*. There are, in terms of overall characterization of both the sūtra and the commentary, large swaths of text that could be regarded as self-contained Yogācāra discourses, which also might be taken as discussions of faith, albeit from a different approach.

As mentioned above, while the role of faith is taken up directly in the context of areas of discussion such as those that deal with recitation of the Buddha's name, there is very little throughout most of the text that emphasizes any special dependence on "other power" 他力 or reliance on Amitābha's vow. Almost all of the discussions on practice and realization emphasize the merits resultant of one's own efforts. When faith is discussed in the context of citations from such works as the *AMF*, the type of faith being emphasized there is clearly the type of faith discussed in that treatise - a non-dualistic type of faith that implies, most fundamentally, a severance of the stream of discursive thought. Almost everything in Wonhyo's text deals with ways in which rebirth in the Pure Land is contingent upon one's own effort. For example, in the passage immediately antecedent to the one just cited (which discusses the case of practitioners of middling capacities), out of five causes, four are based on one's effort toward cultivation, and only one is based on one's vow:

First, one leaves home, abandoning desire and becoming a *sramaṇa*. This is an expression of the expedient means of direct causes. Second, one arouses the enlightened mind. This clarifies direct causes. Third, one focuses one's thoughts on this Buddha. This shows the practice of contemplation. Fourth, one develops merit. This clarifies the arousal of practice. This contemplation and practice contribute to the completion of karma. Fifth, one

vows to be reborn in that land. Based on the combination of this single vow along with the prior four practices, one attains birth [in the Pure Land].⁵

This kind of articulation of practices that lead to more traditionally accepted forms of Indian Buddhist spiritual development (as opposed to direct rebirth in the Pure Land) - including the various means that lead to one's entry into the class of beings that are determined for liberation, can be seen as another form of faith discourse, even though the word "faith" itself may not be directly mentioned.

As a general principle, in reading Wonhyo's works - especially from the perspective of his position on the role of faith - we can identify at least two general types of modes in which arguments are made for the purpose of stimulating the confidence of the believer in the guarantee of spiritual perfection. The first is the mode that dominates the main portions of any given text, one based on a rigorous, rational logic, within which Wonhyo usually cites from mainstream Yogācāra/Tathāgatagarbha texts, most frequently, the *Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra* [YBh]. This mode of exegesis can be seen in virtually all of Wonhyo's commentaries, with this particular one being exemplary. Wonhyo, working within an almost exclusively mainstream Yogācāra framework, by no means denies any Tathāgatagarbha approaches, which are simply not needed for the moment. (It should be pointed out, however, that Wonhyo probably does not at all see himself as moving between two different "schools," or streams of thought, since he basically looks on Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha - along with all other forms of Buddhism - as being parts of one large continuum). This "rationalistic" strain in Wonhyo's writing takes Yogācāra-type analyses of consciousness, afflictions, and predilections themselves as arguments that

5 說有五句。一者、捨家棄欲而作沙門。此顯發起正因方便。二者、發菩提心。是明正因。三者、專念彼佛。是明修觀。四者、作諸功德。是明起行。此觀及行為彼國。此一足願。前四是行行願和合乃得生故。(T.37.128b11-15)

lead to certitude of one's eventual attainment of liberation. In this sūtra, the focus is on this inevitability of the eventual attainment of liberation - or as the case may be, the attainment of the state of non-retrogression 不退轉 - equivalent to the entry into the class determined for enlightenment 正定聚. Since these are originally Abhidharma/Yogācāra categories, it makes perfect sense for Wonhyo to elaborate on them through citations from these families of texts.

As noted, this kind of rational, expository discourse is based, far more frequently than any other text, on the *YBh* (including both attributed and unattributed passages). This kind of expository discourse, which tends to predominate the middle portions of Wonhyo's commentaries, reflects the logical and systematic Yogācāra approach to the building of rational confidence (*adhimukti* 信解) in the teachings - in the law of cause and effect operating through the store consciousness, which can be gradually cultivated into a pure state through the paths of practice.

Inevitably, however, when we move toward the conclusion of any treatise or commentary composed by Wonhyo, we see a reversion to his characteristic, poetic, non-rational, personal mode, valorizing faith and stressing the inaccessibility of the most profound doctrine through discursive thought. While much affinity can certainly be identified between Wonhyo's personal non-rational, poetic mode, and the mode of discourse seen in such Tathāgatagarbha works such as the *AMF*, there are many other readily identifiable stylistic and philosophical influences that come to bear on his approach, not least of which is the strong strain of Daoist sensibility seen in his more poetically oriented work. Thus, I'm not sure that it would be accurate to attribute this proclivity directly to the influence of the *AMF* itself, inasmuch as it might be a more general reflection of the unusual degree of individual faith, religious insight, and literary elegance that set Wonhyo so profoundly apart from his contemporary Chinese and Korean colleagues.

In the opening and closing portions of Wonhyo's essays and

commentaries, the Buddhist truth is invariably presented as something that is ultimately unapproachable through discursive thinking - through language, being accessed only in the event of the severance of the flow of language. The flow of language is something that is severed only in the presence of a profound form of faith, and again, profound faith is attained in the breakage of the dependence on language - a situation of unending mutual reference. Faith, for Wonhyo, in its most profound implications, is synonymous with the mental state of being able to abide in neither this nor that ... non-duality 無二. A flourish, expressing the above theme, is standard fare in the opening and closing passages of all of Wonhyo's complete extant commentaries, and his commentary on the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* is no exception.

The mind-nature of sentient beings interpenetrates without obstruction. It is vast like space, deep like the great sea. Being vast like space, its essence is equal with no special marks to be grasped. How could there be a place for purity and defilement? Being deep like the great sea, its nature is able to smoothly follow conditions without opposition. How could there be a moment of movement or stillness? Sometimes, based on the sense fields, the wind roils the five turbidities which carry the mind along. Submerged by the waves of suffering it enters the long flow [of cyclic existence]. Sometimes, based on wholesome roots, one cuts off the four raging currents and never comes back. He reaches the other shore and is eternally at peace. If this movement and stillness is all one great dream, and using enlightenment one says that it is neither this nor that, then defiled lands and pure lands all come from the one mind. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are ultimately not two realms. Yet returning to the source of great enlightenment one accumulates merit. Going along with the flow of the long dream, one cannot suddenly awaken, and hence the incarnations of the sage are distant and proximate. The teaching that is established is

praised and disparaged. Thus the world-honored Śākyamuni appears in this saha-world to warn against the five evils and encourage goodness. Amitabha-tathāgata leads them to paradise, guiding the three classes of capacities⁶ to rebirth there. Such kinds of provisional manifestations cannot be fully explained.⁷

In this commentary, the most sustained discussion of faith (broached through its opposite - doubt 疑, 疑惑) occurs in its final portions, wherein Wonhyo undertakes the explanation of the meaning the four doubts 四疑惑 regarding the four kinds of cognition 四智. Wonhyo devotes a significant portion of his commentary to the explanation of the meaning of the doubts and the forms of cognition with which they are associated. From a philosophical perspective I see this as the most interesting and creative portion of the commentary, since, in the sūtra itself, these four doubts concerning these four specific cognitions are mentioned only in a short passage at the very end, with the sūtra stating:

Then the Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, for what reason are some of the inhabitants of that land in the born in the embryonic state and the others born by transformation?” The Buddha replied,

6 Three kinds of Pure Land practitioners explained in the Sūtra of Immeasurable Life who are reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha: the superior, the middling, and the inferior. These are mentioned in the passages cited below:

- A. The superior 上輩 are those who enter the *sangha*, arouse the intention for enlightenment, maintain steadfast mindfulness of the Buddha of Infinite Life, cultivate meritorious virtues, and vow to be reborn in his Pure Land.
- B. The middling 中輩 are those who arouse the intention for enlightenment, maintain steadfast mindfulness of the Buddha of Infinite Life, maintain pure precepts, erect *stupas* and images, give offerings of food to the clergy, and vow to be reborn in his Pure Land.
- C. The inferior 下輩 are those who arouse the intention for enlightenment, maintain steadfast mindfulness up to ten times, and vow to be reborn in the Pure Land. (T.12.272b16)

7 然夫衆生心性融通無礙。泰若虛空。湛猶巨海。若虛空故其體平等無別相而可得。何有淨穢之處。猶巨海故其性潤滑能隨緣而不逆。豈無動靜之時。爾乃或因塵風淪五濁而隨轉。沈苦浪而長流。或承善根截四流而不還。至彼岸而永寂。若斯動寂皆是大夢。以覺言之無此無彼。穢土淨國本來一心。生死涅槃終無二際。然歸原大覺積功乃得。隨流長夢不可頓開。所以聖人垂迹有避有適。所設言教或褒或貶。至如牟尼世尊現此娑婆誠五惡而勸善彌陀如來御彼安養引三輩而導生。斯等權迹不可具陳矣。(T.37.125c2-12)

“Maitreya, if there are sentient beings who do various meritorious deeds aspiring for birth in that land while still entertaining doubt, such beings are unable to comprehend the Buddha-cognition: that is, cognition of the inconceivable, cognition of the unassayable, cognition of the boundless great vehicle, and the incomparable, unequalled, and unsurpassed supreme cognition. Although they misunderstand these cognitions, they still believe in retribution for evil and reward for virtue and so cultivate a stock of merits, aspiring for birth in that land. Such beings are born in a palace, where they dwell for five hundred years without being able to behold the Buddha, hear his exposition of the Dharma, or see the hosts of bodhisattvas and *śrāvakas*. For this reason, that type of birth in the Pure Land is called ‘embryonic birth.’”⁸

In spite of the fact that this passage occupies only seven lines in the source text, its explanation occupies almost twenty percent of Wonhyo’s commentary. Why? Probably because it is a passage that raises serious questions about faith and rebirth, and is at the same time wholly unsatisfying and unforthcoming in its explanation, in the sense that after naming these four distinct kinds of cognition - which are obviously of critical importance, the sūtra offers virtually no explanation as to any of their implications - only that one needs to overcome one’s doubt regarding them if one wants to obtain full, direct rebirth in the Amitabha’s paradise.

In response to this passage, Wonhyo carries through with the kind of erudite analysis that once again shows his scholarly mastery of the tradition, along with his philosophical insight, by working out a detailed explanation of the four doubts and their associated cognitions. This section of his commentary makes for a fascinating study of Wonhyo in

8 爾時慈氏菩薩白佛言。世尊。何因何緣。彼國人民胎生化生。佛告慈氏。若有衆生。以疑惑心修諸功德。願生彼國。不了佛智。不思議智。不可稱智。大乘廣智。無等無倫最上勝智。於此諸智疑惑不信。然猶信罪福修習善本。願生其國。此諸衆生生彼宮殿。壽五百歲。常不見佛不聞經法。不見菩薩聲聞聖衆。是故於彼國土。謂之胎生。(T.12.278a21-28)

a number of ways. First, as we will show later, it contains the kind of mixture typical of Wonhyo's discourse as was mentioned above, starting with a detailed investigation and analysis of supporting Yogācāra doctrines, and concluding with a non-dualistic faith-oriented summary conjoined with a citation from the *AMF*.

More importantly though, Wonhyo shows his mettle as a commentator by picking up a passage that while apparently packed with implications, has, in essence, been unfairly dropped on the reader at the end of the text, offering virtually nothing in the way of explanation of its meaning. In the other major pre-Wonhyo commentary on the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*, the commentator, Huiyuan, simply ignores this passage.

Given the prominence of this matter as the conclusion to the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*, we should certainly be justified in asking how Huiyuan could simply ignore such an obvious imposition. No disparagement of Huiyuan's philological or philosophical abilities is intended here, since, with the benefit of digital search capabilities, it is quite reasonable to go ahead and surmise that he simply could not come up with even a clue as to what, in the known East Asian Buddhist corpus, he might be able to link this discussion - as these four terms do not appear anywhere else in the extant corpus, other than in the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* itself - and in Wonhyo's commentary. So it is unlikely that any commentator - especially Huiyuan - would have been able to treat them by simply locating them elsewhere. This is especially the case with Huiyuan, since, as I noted in a recent article dealing with Huiyuan-Wonhyo comparisons, Huiyuan (or whoever he was) was writing almost a full century before Wonhyo, which means that he was working long before Xuanzang's translations of the Yogācāra texts - most importantly the *YBh*, were available. Wonhyo, on the other hand, has the advantage of not only having these texts available, but a mastery of them that seems to come close to memorization. Thus, with his philosophical insights into the implications

of these four cognitions, along with a commensurate overall grasp on the Mahāyāna tradition (especially Yogācāra), he emerges with an impressive explanation.

III. Exegesis of the Four Cognitions

Wonhyo clarifies the matter by matching up the four cognitions from the closing passages of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* with the four cognitions, taught in Yogācāra to be the result of the purification of consciousness attained in the transformation of the bases (*āśraya-paravṛtti* 轉依).⁹ The four associations made are:

1. The cognition of the inconceivable 不思議智 is associated with the Yogācāra “cognition with unrestricted activity” 成所作智 (the cognition that results from the transformed function of the five sense consciousnesses). Wonhyo explains that this is because one is able to apprehend phenomena with a level of effectiveness that would normally be considered inconceivable, such as knowing the affairs of all the worlds in the ten directions.

2. The cognition of the unassayable 不可稱智 is associated with the Yogācāra “marvelous observing cognition” 妙觀察智 (the cognition that results from the transformed function of the sixth, thinking consciousness). This consciousness is capable of evaluating unassayable objects, referring to all phenomena, which like the contents of a dream, are neither existent nor inexistent.

3. The cognition of the breadth of the great vehicle 大乘廣智 is associated with the “cognition of intrinsic equality” 平等性智 (the cognition resultant from the transformed function of the seventh, ego-consciousness). Since one is able to see to the sameness in nature, one is not tricked into the prejudices of the lesser vehicles, or trapped in the doctrines of either self or selflessness.

⁹ The discussion of these four starts from T.37.130b4.

4. Finally, the incomparable, unequaled, unsurpassed supreme cognition 無等無倫最上勝智 is associated with the Yogācāra “mirror cognition” 大圓鏡智 (the cognition resultant from the transformed function of the eighth, *alayavijñāna*). The implications of this cognition are special for Wonhyo, and so he explicates it at some length.

This can be schematized as follows:

Sūtra of Immeasurable Life (無量壽經)	Yogācāra (唯識)
cognition of the inconceivable 不思議智	cognition with unrestricted activity 成作事智
cognition of the unassayable 不可稱智	marvelous observing cognition 妙觀察智
cognition of the breadth of the great vehicle 大乘廣智	cognition of intrinsic equality 平等性智
incomparable, unequaled, unsurpassed supreme cognition 無等無倫最上勝智	mirror cognition 大圓鏡智

Wonhyo then proceeds to explain how doubt arises in regard to each of these cognitions. As we will see, these doubts are all quite discursive in character,¹⁰ the kind of doubts that might be called failed attempts at thinking these cognitions through logically. The first doubt, in regard to the cognition with unrestricted activity 成作事智 (in this discussion, Wonhyo dispenses with the terminology of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*, working instead with the standard Yogācāra terminology) arises from an apparent contradiction seen in the sūtra’s claim for rebirth in the Pure Land by virtue of a mere ten repetitions of the Buddha’s name.

Since the scriptures say that the seeds of good and evil action do

¹⁰ Since, in the Yogācāra scheme of mental factors, the factor of faith 信 is considered to function in the domain of the sixth, thinking consciousness, it makes sense that the activity of doubt should be fully discursive in character.

not disappear or fade away over time,¹¹ so how could it be possible for someone to suddenly extinguish all afflictions and enter into the non-retrogressing, determined class of beings? The counter response says that such a rationale fails to take into account the great authoritative power possessed by the buddhas, whereby they are able to treat the great as small, and the heavy as light. Two real-life examples are provided. One is that of a great pile of firewood, which, although it might have taken several thousand years to accumulate, can be burnt up in a single day if it is set afire. The other example is that of a handicapped person who cannot walk more than a couple of hundred yards in a single day, and for whom therefore the completion of a long journey in a single day is an apparent impossibility. But if this person avails himself to a ride on a swift boat supported by a strong tailwind, he might accomplish the long journey in a single day (in the modern day, no doubt a fast automobile would work in this kind of simile). Therefore one should have confidence of the great abilities of this boatman (the Buddha).

The second doubt, that concerning the marvelous observing wisdom 妙觀察智, arises in response to statements in the sūtras that say such things as, “One marvelously observes that all phenomena are neither existent nor inexistent, yet while avoiding both extremes, one should not stick to the middle either.” One then thinks that when assaying things, it is clear that heavy things sink, and light things rise. But if we say that light things don’t rise, and heavy things don’t sink, then language is rendered into meaninglessness. It is the same with causation. If one says that there is really no inexistence, one directly falls into the perspective of existence. If one says that there is really no existence, then one falls into the view of inexistence. If one claims inexistence without allowing for existence, or claims existence without allowing for inexistence, it is same as saying that the heavy does not sink, and the light does not rise, which is to fall into nonsensical talk.

11 In Yogācāra, it is a fundamental tenet of the teaching of the *alayavijñāna* that not one iota of the potential energy of the seeds is lost, or fades in potency.

A similar example is raised with the notion of dependent arising, which is seen as either being existent or empty - or else one has no recourse but to attach to the middle, which is in this case, absurdity. Hence there is the need to establish cognition of the unassayable, which implies the disclosure of the deep profundity of all phenomena which is removed from language and severs discursive thought 離言絕慮, which does not seek evaluation through discursive thought, and does not attach to the meanings of words. As in the *Diamond Sūtra*, words cannot be avoided as the basis for communication, but they also cannot be attached to. This constitutes the resolution of the second doubt.

The third doubt, arising in the context of the wisdom of intrinsic equality, has as its starting point such scriptural passages as that seen in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* that say “All sentient beings are possessed of mind, and all those who have mind, attain perfect enlightenment” (T.12.524c8). This ends up leading some people into confusion, as they might end up thinking:

If tathāgatas and sentient beings all possess the buddha-nature, given the fact that they completely save all sentient beings and make them attain perfect enlightenment, even though sentient beings are extremely great in number, eventually this number must be exhausted, which means that the last buddha will have no access to the merit of saving others. Not having others to save, he will not be able to become a buddha. Lacking in this merit, he will not be able to save others, and this results in contradiction. (T.37.131a12)

The making of this kind of erroneous discrimination is tantamount to debunking the great vehicle, and nonbelief its broad doctrine of intrinsic equality.

The “vast great vehicle cognition” 大乘廣智 is established to counter this kind of narrow-minded attachment. It is called “vast” because there is no one who is not carried by the Buddha’s wisdom.

Since the universe is limitless, sentient beings are numberless. Since the three times lack border, cyclic existence lacks beginning and end. Since sentient beings lack beginning and end, the buddhas also lack beginning and end. If we admit that buddhas have a beginning and attainment, that would mean that before this there were no buddhas, and thus no holy teaching, no hearing of it, no elocution and no cultivation - yet they become buddhas. This means that there is an effect without a cause, which is of course, untenable.

Based on this reasoning, all buddhas lack a beginning. Yet even though they lack a beginning, there is not one buddha who was not originally a sentient being. And even though they were all originally sentient beings, their development lacks a beginning. Based on this, we can conjecture that sentient beings must be endless. Yet even though they are truly endless, there is not a single one of them that does not eventually become a buddha. And even though they all eventually become buddhas, their development is endless. Therefore one should believe in the wisdom of intrinsic equality in nature. There are none who are not saved, yet there is no limit to their number. It is based on this that the vast great vehicle cognition is established, and this resolves the third doubt (T.37.131a26).

The fourth doubt is constituted by confusion as to whether it is really possible for the mirror cognition to perfectly illuminate all referents. This doubt arises when one thinks that since the universe is limitless, its worlds are also limitless, and since its worlds are limitless, sentient beings are also limitless. Since sentient beings are limitless, their mental functions, faculties, desires, and temperaments and so forth are also without limit. This being the case, how could one possibly have exhaustive knowledge of everything? And would one come to know all these things through gradual cultivation, or would one come to know them suddenly without cultivation?

If it is the case that we come to know them suddenly, without cultivation, then all unenlightened worldlings should also experience this

kind of cognition, given the fact that no special causes seem to be required. If it is the case that one finally attains full cognition after a period of gradual cultivation, then it would not be the case that all objects are limitless, since to be limitless and yet be exhaustible is contradictory. In this case practitioners would advance and then regress without arriving to a state of completion. How could they attain universal cognition, known as the all-inclusive cognition 一切種智?

The unequalled, most excellent cognition 無等無倫最上勝智 that is named in the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* is established in order to overcome these two obstacles. The argument for the acceptance of this cognition has a special dimension not seen in the above three, since Wonhyo says that “One should merely have faith, as it cannot be met through reason. It exists beyond the two truths, residing in non-duality” (T.37.131b9). As compared with the explanation of the prior three doubts, this is a noticeably different approach, as it is the first time that he has declared an explanation to be beyond the purview of reason. As perhaps the astute Wonhyo student might anticipate, he continues the elaboration of this concept by relying on tropes from the *AMF* - the One Mind, activated enlightenment, and intrinsic enlightenment:

How does one generate faith in this cognition? For example, in the way that, worlds, limitless as they may be, do not exist outside the universe. In the same way, a myriad objects, without limit, are all contained within the One Mind. The buddha-cognition, free from marks, returns to the mind-source. The cognition and the one mind, combining together, are not two. With activated enlightenment, one returns to intrinsic enlightenment, and hence there is not a single object that exists outside of this cognition. Through this reasoning, there is no object that is not exhausted and yet there is not such thing as a limit. Using limitless cognition, one illuminates limitless objects. As the *AMF* says:

All objects are originally the one mind, free from conceptualization. Because sentient beings deludedly perceive objective realms, the mind has limitation. Since one gives rise to deluded conceptions, one is unable to assay the dharma-nature, and is thus unable to apprehend it. Since all buddha-tathāgatas are free from the mark of the subjective perceiver, there is no place where their cognition does not reach. Since their minds are authentic, they are identical with the nature of all phenomena. Its own essence clarifies all deluded phenomena. Possessing the function of great cognition, and numberless expedient means, they are able to show the significance of all phenomena according to what all sentient beings should be able to understand. Hence it is called “all inclusive cognition.” (T.37.131b15-20)

He then wraps up, in a manner comparable to his conclusion in other commentarial works, in a total-faith mode, fully acknowledging the limitations of what can be apprehended through language and discursive thought. He sums up the entire content of his exegesis, along with what he takes to be the bottom line of the sūtra itself, but simplifying the whole matter into one basic common denominator, which we can paraphrase by saying: “Look, if all of this is too complicated and unwieldy, just know this: if you can fully submit yourself to the Buddha with a mind of complete faith, that will take care of everything.”

This is the peerless, unequalled, superior cognition. Since there is nothing to be seen, there is nothing that it doesn't see. In this way it corrects the fourth doubt. If you are unable to grasp the point, it is like words grasping meanings - limited and limitless - none escape error. It is indeed based on the

approach that denies a limit that one provisionally posits limitless. If one is unable to resolve these four doubts, even if one manages to be born in that land, one only resides at its outer edge. If there is someone like this, even if s/he is unable to understand the world of the prior four cognitions, but is able to humbly yield even though his/her mind's eye is not yet opened, and *with faith, think only of the tathāgata with wholehearted submission*; this kind of person, according to his level of practice will be born in that land, and not reside in its border land.¹² Those born stuck at the edge form a single class of beings who are not counted among the nine grades.¹³ Thus, one should not deludedly give rise to doubt. (T.37.131b21-29, emphasis mine)

Thus, while Wonhyo has not taken up the matter of “faith in other power” in a formal sense as a topic for elaboration, it would seem that in terms of his final assessment of the point of the sūtra, indeed, something very much like faith in other power is the final solution.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

(K=Korean, C=Chinese)

Bujeongchwi (K) 不定聚

Bulgachingji (K) 不可稱智

Bultoejeon (K) 不退轉

Busauji (K) 不思議智

Byeon-gye (K) 邊界

12 邊地. The border land to Amitabha's Pure Land, where the lax and haughty 懈怠, are detained for 500 years, also called 胎宮 womb-palace and 邊界 border-realm.

13 Or “nine classes.” Buddhist scriptures commonly define such things as afflictions, heavenly rebirths, faculties of sentient beings and so forth into nine categories, which are the three categories of superior, middling, and inferior 上·中·下, further divided into the same three, resulting in nine.

Byeonji (K) 邊地
Cheyong (K) 體用
Daeseung-gisillon (K), Da-sheng-qi-xin-lun (C) 大乘起信論
Daeseunggwangji (K) 大乘廣智
Daewon-gyeongji (K) 大圓鏡智
Ha (K) 下
Habae (K) 下輩
Haeman (K) 懈怠
Huiyuan (C) 慧遠
I-eonjeollyeo (K) 離言絕慮
Ilchejongji (K) 一切種智
Jeongjeongchwi (K) 正定聚
Jeon-ui (K) 轉依
Jung (K) 中
Jungbae (K) 中輩
Mudeungmuryun-choisangseungji (K) 無等無倫最上勝智
Mu-i (K) 無二
Muryangsu-gyeong (K), Wu-liang-shou-jing (C) 無量壽經
Muryangsu-gyeong-jong-yo (K) 無量壽經宗要
Myogwanchalji (K) 妙觀察智
Pyeongdeungseongji (K) 平等性智
Sajeongchwi (K) 邪定聚
Saji (K) 四智
Samchwi (K) 三聚
Sang (K) 上
Sangbae (K) 上輩
Sa-uihok (K) 四疑惑
Seongjaksaji (K) 成作事智
Seongsojakji (K) 成所作智
Sin (K) 信
Sinhae (K) 信解
Taegung (K) 胎宮

Taryeok (K) 他力
 Ui (K) 疑
 Uihok (K) 疑惑
 Wonhyo (K) 元曉
 Xuanzang (C) 玄奘

Abbreviations

- HBJ *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo* (韓國佛教全書: The Collected Texts of Korean Buddhism). Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1984.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (大正新修大藏經: Japanese Edition of the Buddhist Canon). Ed. by Takakasu-Junjirō (高楠順次郎) et al. Tokyo: Taishō-Issaikyō-Kankōkai, 1924-1935.

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