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The Essence-Function(Mom-Momjit) Construction as a Hermeneutic Device to Interpret the *Commentary on the Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*

Sung-bae Park

Abstract

In his Kisillon so, Wōnhyo argued that the Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith was originally a non-sectarian text revealing a key hermeneutical principle through which hwajaeng and t'ong pulgyo could be achieved. This principle is contained in the Chinese ti-yung (K. ch'e-yong) or "essence-function" formula, which I am calling the mom-momjit. The aim of using the mom-momjit paradigm is to show the inseparability or non-duality of two apparently contradictory concepts. Throughout his Kisillon so, the use of the mom-momjit hermeneutic device is the most characteristic feature of Wōnhyo's interpretation of the Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith. Mom, representing the universal essence of One Mind, seals without diminishing, while momjit, representing the external function, opens into myriad phenomena without exhausting itself.

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Wŏnhyo's analysis of Mahāyāna Buddhist faith in terms of the essence-function formula, where One Mind is the essence and faith is the function, can be regarded as one of his most valuable contributions to Buddhist studies. According to the mom-momjit view, in which faith is perceived as the external operation of one's own mind, faith and enlightenment are simultaneous and inseparable. This implies that as soon as a resolute faith is awakened, the One Mind of Buddha is instantly realized. This is the conceptual leap that provides both the theoretical and practical basis for the doctrine of 'sudden enlightenment' developed later, for example, in Chinul's syncretic harmoni-zation of Hwaŏm and Son Buddhism.

Key words: Wŏnhyo (元曉), Mahāyāna Faith, Essence-function (體用), Mom-momjit, One Mind (一心).

I. Introduction: The Shipwreck Experience Encountered while Reading the Classics

On its most profound level, the experience of reading is a kind of shipwreck. A text presents the reader with an idea so challenging or contradictory that it cannot be immediately assimilated and yet cannot be ignored or explained away. Unable to avoid the hazard, the determined reader collides head-on with this new idea, and is then left floating amidst the wreckage of his earlier preconceptions. It can be a disorienting, even frightening, experience.

This is not the end of the journey, however, but a new beginning: the reader is washed ashore, alone on an otherwise deserted island, and he builds himself a life raft of the sturdiest pieces of his old ship. Forced to put these pieces together in innovative ways, he finds new uses for familiar elements. The craft that results is radically different from the old ship: smaller, lighter, and more seaworthy. More importantly, the reader is changed in the process. He understands new things about himself, the boat on which he sails, and the sea through which he journeys. And in the exceptional case of a reader who

is also a brilliant thinker, the shipwreck experience can result in a record that serves to guide others.

The Kisillon so (起信論), or *Commentary on the Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (大乘起信論疏) is just such a record. It records the encounter of the 7th century Korean Buddhist thinker Wōnhyo with one of the central texts of the East Asian Mahāyāna tradition: the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*.

Significantly, Wōnhyo's shipwreck occurred almost immediately, with the title of the text. This is important, because in the East Asian commentarial tradition the interpretation of a text's title is given special weight as a key to the text's underlying meaning. Wōnhyo's innovative reading of the title became the foundation for a radically new interpretation of the entire text, one based upon the *t'i-yung* (體用) or essence-function device of Classical Chinese thought, and containing within itself the seed of sudden enlightenment theory (頓悟).

How can we get some sense of Wōnhyo's unusual approach in English? Read *Dasheng qixinlun* in Chinese, the title can be rendered most literally in English as "*Mahāyāna Awakens Faith Treatise*." It is usually translated as "the Awakening of Faith in *Mahāyāna*," but I give it here as "the Awakening of *Mahāyāna* Faith." The difference in wording may seem slight, but it is actually quite important, and cuts to the heart of Wōnhyo's unique reading. The problem with "the Awakening of Faith in *Mahāyāna*" as a translation is that it treats *Mahāyāna* as the object of faith, which means that faith and *Mahāyāna* become separate and distinct entities. While this is obviously a very natural construction in English, its essentially dualistic viewpoint inevitably leads to a gradualist view of Buddhist awakening: the implication is that the treatise is meant to stimulate our thinking about Buddhism, and thus to gradually awaken our faith in the power of *Mahāyāna* to lead us to salvation.

In contrast, translating the title as *the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* avoids the subject-object construction and its inherent dualism, much as the original Chinese does. In this translation, *Mahāyāna* faith becomes a single interdependent entity, which means that *Mahāyāna* is faith, and faith is

Mahāyāna. Note too that the phrase is not an object and is not acted upon. *Mahāyāna* faith is not “woken up” by anyone or anything; it simply “wakes.”

On what grounds can we move to this new translation? To begin, there is strong grammatical evidence for this reading. In Classical Chinese prose, a verb rarely follows its object. Therefore, the most likely relationship between *Dasheng*, or *Mahāyāna*, and *qixin*, Awaken Faith, is not that of a verbal phrase (*qixin*, 起信) and its object (*Dasheng*, 大乘) but rather of a qualifier (*Dasheng*) and that which it qualifies (*qixin*). The last line of the treatise’s invocation—*qi dasheng zhengxin*, “Awakening right *Mahāyāna* faith”—and the line following it—*yu fa neng-ch’i mo-ho-yen hsin-ken*, “There is a dharma which can arouse the root of *Mahāyāna* faith”—also use this construction. In both lines, the term *Mahāyāna* functions grammatically simply to qualify the word “faith.” Indeed, of the fifty-four occurrences of the term “faith” in the treatise, it is used as a transitive verb requiring an object only twelve times; in every other instance it is used as a noun obviously not requiring an object.

More important than the grammatical argument, however, is the *t’i-yung* or essence-function logic underlying this formulation. In the hermeneutic tradition of East Asia, *t’i*, or essence, refers to the noumenal, internal, and invisible aspects of reality, whereas *yung*, or function, refers to its phenomenal, external and visible aspects. The purpose of the *t’i-yung* formula is to show the inseparability of two seemingly separate but in fact nondistinct things (Park 1983, 36). One of the earliest classical works of Ch’an literature in China, the *Platform Sūtra* (壇經), illustrated the relation between *t’i* and *yung* with the analogy of a lamp and its light. Whereas the bright lamp is *t’i*, essence, its light is *yung*, function, meaning that the lamp and its light are inseparable and nondual. Thus, the purpose of the *t’i-yung* hermeneutic device in Chinese Buddhist texts is to remove false discrimination which arises from a dualistic way of thinking, as reflected in such dichotomies as subject-object, means-end, cause-effect, arising-cessation, and birth-death.

Though the *t’i-yung* hermeneutic device has been widely used in East Asian philosophy for centuries, I generally prefer to substitute the Korean words *mom*, meaning “body,” and *momjit*, meaning “gesture,” or more

literally, “body movement.” As I see it, this simple substitution significantly enhances the descriptive power of the device. For while “essence” and “function” are abstract and intellectual in feel, “body” and “gesture” are concrete and visual, and the relationship between them is clearer. We know from daily experience that the body is not what it *does*, whether that is walking or sitting or standing up. But we also know that these movements *derive* from the body and are an expression of its nature, so to speak. It is this relationship between *source* and *manifestation* that the device attempts to describe.

We can now see how the *mom-momjit* construction underlies our alternative translation of the title as the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. According to Wōnhyo, *Dasheng*, or *Mahāyāna*, is not the object of *qixin*, or Awaken Faith. Rather, *Mahāyāna*, meaning Great Carrier or One Vehicle, i.e., One Mind, or “the Mind of sentient beings,” represents *mom*, or internal essence, whereas faith represents *momjit*, or external function. In his own words:

To conclude: *Mahāyāna* is the essence of the doctrine of this treatise; “awakening faith is its efficacious function. [Thus,] the title is composed [in such a way as] to show the unity of essence and function. Hence the words, *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*. (H. 1, 735a)

In this way, Wōnhyo dispenses with the subject-object or “faith in ____” construction and replaces it with the *mom-momjit*, or essence-function, hermeneutic device. Faith, for Wōnhyo, is simply the function (*momjit*) of Mahāyāna or One Mind. The title of the text, “The Awakening of *Mahāyāna* Faith,” thus comes to mean simply “the naturally functioning mind” or “the properly operating mind,” which is, in effect, the mind of faith.

The implication in terms of sudden enlightenment should be clear: if faith is *Mahāyāna* and *Mahāyāna* is One Mind, the awakening of faith is the automatic realization of Mind. Enlightenment *is* faith, which means that as soon as there is faith, there is enlightenment.

II. Language as Emanation of One Mind

If I had to point to a single line in Wŏnhyo's discussion of the title as the exact moment of shipwreck, it would be this one: "I do not know how to speak of it, but as I am compelled now to name it, I call it '*Mahāyāna*'" (H. 1, 733a). I would choose this sentence because it shows him wrestling with the implications of his decision to identify *Mahāyāna* as the *subject* of the title instead of its object, and thus to abandon the dualistic "faith in ____" construction for the non-dualistic "essence-function" model.

The immediate result of this decision is a radical transformation of the relationship between the reader and the text. *Mahāyāna*, now equated with One Mind, is placed beyond the realm of rational thought, and Wŏnhyo—learned philosopher and skilled interpreter though he is—no longer knows how to speak about it. Forced to identify it, he can only gesture toward it by using its name, *Mahāyāna*. Implicit in this admission is a powerful statement about the nature of language itself: language is a kind of pointer, but it cannot contain the things to which it points; it is, in traditional Buddhist understanding, *empty*, meaning that it is a mental construct devoid of ultimate reality. To use it to describe the indescribable would only end in a complete distortion.

The result is an impasse, what we have called a shipwreck, or what Western theologians sometimes call the "death experience." As Wŏnhyo sees it, *Mahāyāna* is nothing other than One Mind, and the source of both faith and enlightenment. This is what the theologian Paul Tillich would call our "ultimate concern." But if thought cannot apprehend it, and language cannot describe it, what then can we *do* about it? How can we move forward? We are lost in a kind of limbo.

Despair would be a real possibility at this point, but Wŏnhyo nevertheless sees a way out. His "resurrection experience," so to speak, comes a few lines later, when he writes, "Who can discuss *Mahāyāna* or awaken deep faith, except for people like The Great Gentleman Who Kept his Mouth Shut, and the One Glance Hero, who have passed beyond language and cut

off thought?” (H. 1, 733b).

The Great Gentleman Who Kept his Mouth Shut, *dugu daeśa*, refers to Vimalakīrti, the protagonist of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* (維摩經), and to the most famous incident in the *sūtra*, in which Vimalakīrti is visited by a group of bodhisattvas who engage him in philosophical debate. They are bested on each occasion, until Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom, confronts him, and each is called upon to give the truest account of “the dharma discourse of nonduality.” Mañjuśrī speaks first, but Vimalakīrti gets the better of him by shutting his mouth and remaining silent, an action traditionally interpreted as an indication that the nondual dharma is too profound to express in language.

“The One Glance Hero” refers to a story about Lao Tzu, the legendary founder of Daoism and author of the famed *Dao De Jing* (道德經). As the story has it, Confucius and a disciple run into Lao Tzu (老子) on a footpath, but the two sages pass each other without a word. The disciple asks his master why he didn’t speak to the famous Daoist, and Confucius replies, “When anyone like that so much as makes eye contact, he knows whether the Dao is present in the other. So it’s all right when nothing is expressed in words.” Again, Wōnhyo makes reference to a Buddhist tradition in which the dharma is understood to be linguistically inexpressible, and silence the most profound way of pointing to the truth.

Both of these references obviously point toward a strong awareness of the limits of language, but they are not really about limits. Both Vimalakīrti and Lao Tzu have “moved beyond language,” in Wōnhyo’s phrase, and are therefore free of its constraints. This freedom gives them a newfound power to both see (in a “glance”) and express (through gesture) the truth of the dharma. In essence, we are looking at the freedom of the enlightened person—a freedom that looks miraculous from the point of view of the unenlightened observer bound by the limits of language and dualistic thought.

Wōnhyo’s view of the radical freedom of enlightenment is a “resurrection experience” because it points the way forward. Having acknowledged the limits of language, he is not immobilized by those limits; instead, he depicts them as a boundary line beyond which lays a new kind of

power. Indeed, the line about Vimalakīrti and Lao Tzu becomes a new starting point. He leaves the question of silence behind, and instead turns his attention to Aśvaghosha's reasons for writing the treatise: "He wished to help practitioners of the Tao permanently break off from the endless illusory phenomena and finally return to the source of everything, the one mind" (H. 1, 733b). In other words, instead of shutting his mouth or otherwise falling silent in the face of the ineffable, Aśvaghosha wrote a treatise.

Noting this fact, Wōnhyo essentially re-embraces the possibility of a useful role for language in the search for enlightenment—assuming that that role is based on an enlightened understanding of reality. The reasoning behind this view derives from Wōnhyo's belief in the fundamental unity of all phenomenon: since a non-dualistic or complete understanding of the world necessarily encompasses our dualistic or partial one, the two are in fact intertwined. Rephrasing this statement in terms of the essence-function model, we can say that language—like the entire unenlightened world—is a function or emanation of One Mind.

III. Opening and Sealing as the Movement between *Mom* and *Momjit*

Although he embraces Aśvaghosha's writing of the treatise by essentially endorsing a real, if limited, role for language in the search for enlightenment, Wōnhyo nevertheless goes on to make a distinction between two groups of readers: scholars who study Buddhist texts and Buddhist practitioners who actively seek enlightenment. Aśvaghosha, he believes, sought to meet the needs of both groups:

[In writing this small treatise,] he wished to enable scholars, who open it even for a moment, to completely extract the message of the Tripitaka. And he wished to help practitioners of the *Dao* permanently break off from the endless illusory phenomena and finally return to the source of everything, the one mind. (H. 1, 733b)

As this passage indicates, Wōnhyo is respectful of both scholars and practitioners—perhaps because, as an enlightened monk who was also a

celebrated exegete, he belonged to *both* groups. But, as subsequent passages make clear, there is no doubt that he gives priority to practice over scholarship—or, to put it another way, that he believes the true purpose of scholarship is to be found in the guidance of practice. This is an important point because his commentary, like the text itself, is a work of tremendous erudition, largely involved in the task of synthesizing or “reconciling” doctrinal conflicts. Yet his interest in reconciliation is not simply the search for greater clarity or logicity—though it is clear that, as a scholar, he values those things. Rather, it is an attempt to situate the fundamental unity of the Buddhist world view within the vast expanse of Buddhist theory, and to show how even the most secret theoretical details relate back to the enlightenment experience. By painstakingly reconciling the details of conflicting doctrines—by demonstrating, in other words, how the *momjit* of doctrine relates to the *mom* of enlightenment—Wōnhyo seeks to transmit to the reader something of the *experience* of enlightenment itself:

Although what is discussed in the treatise is vast, it may be simply described as follows: By unfolding the two aspects of one mind, it comprehensively encompasses the one hundred and eight jewels of the *Mahāyāna* teaching. By showing the essential purity in phenomenal impurity, it completely synthesizes the subtle truth....Therefore, the writer of the treatise states: “This treatise must be written because it aspires to embrace completely the limitless meaning of the Tathāgata’s vast, magnificent, and profound teaching.” (H. 1, 733b)

The word “unfolding” points to the centrality of the *mom-momjit* paradigm in Wōnhyo’s method. While One Mind is *mom*, its two aspects—phenomenal and noumenal reality—are *momjit*. As *momjit*, the two aspects are functions or emanations of One Mind, distinct from *mom* and yet not actually separate or independent from it. The *mom-momjit* relationship thus underlies the back-and-forth movement between “unfolding” and “sealing” by which Wōnhyo affirms the essential unity of Buddhist doctrine and the enlightened worldview:

This is the purpose of the treatise and when it is unfolded, it takes on immeasurable and limitless meanings. Accordingly, when it is sealed, the dharma of the two aspects of one mind comprises its essence. The two aspects contain, without confusion, limitless meanings, which are identical with one mind, completely melded, as it were, with it. Thus, the doctrine unfolds and seals freely. It proves and refutes without restriction. Unfolding without complicating; sealing without narrowing; proving without gaining; refuting without losing—this is Aśvaghosha’s wonderful discursive skill and the complete essence of the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. (H. 1, 733c)

At this point, we should stop and consider the two terms “unfolding” (*kae*, 開) and “sealing” (*hap*, 合) more closely, as they are technical terms with specific meanings. In brief, Wōnhyo asserts that there are two aspects of Buddhist truth, which he calls “doctrine” (*chong*, 宗) and “essence” (*yo*, 要). In his view, doctrine and essence are interrelated along the lines of the *mom-momjit* paradigm: “doctrine” is the development of the one into the many, and “essence” is the unification of the many back into the one. Wōnhyo attempts to move between these two realms by means of the “opening” and “sealing” of the truth. When the truth is “opened,” it is called doctrine; when it is “sealed,” it is called essence. Although these two truth realms may sometimes seem to be contradictory, they freely interpenetrate each other without any obstruction.

Contemporary scholars have tended to look at Wōnhyo’s *kae-hap* as a purely intellectual device, equating it with the Western concepts of analysis and synthesis. Opening, *kae*, thus comes to mean the extension or elaboration of basic Buddhist principles in order to form complex theories, while closing, *hap*, signifies the distillation of complex doctrines down to their essential, unitary principles. While true as far as it goes, this viewpoint fails to acknowledge the worldview underlying *kae-hap* and thus trivializes Wōnhyo’s purpose. For *kae-hap* is not simply about ideas but about the *enlightenment experience*. Opening and sealing is not just the movement between doctrine and essence, it is the movement between *momjit* and *mom*. We will take up this subject again in the final section of this introduction.

IV. Interpenetration of *Mom* into *Momjit*

As we have now spent some time talking about the *mom-momjit* paradigm, it is worthwhile to take a moment to remind ourselves that the concept at its core is non-duality, in other words, the undifferentiated nature of reality when free from the interference of thought and language. Nonduality is, of course, the primary tenet of Buddhism: Buddhist enlightenment is simply the realization of the non-dual nature of the world. Yet, in exploring this theme, both the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* and Wōnhyo's commentary inevitably struggle with the limits imposed by the dualistic nature of language. As we will see, the tendency of subtly dualistic modes of thought to tarnish the picture of non-duality has some relevance for Wōnhyo's theory of enlightenment.

The treatise seeks to describe the relationship between non-duality and enlightenment in a variety of different ways; perhaps the most accessible is its use of the simile of the water and its waves. Yoshito S. Hakeda gives a somewhat explanatory rendering of this simile in his 1967 translation of the treatise:

This is like the relationship that exists between the water of the ocean [i.e., enlightenment] and its waves [i.e., modes of mind] stirred by the wind [i.e., ignorance]. Water and wind are inseparable; but water is not mobile by nature, and if the wind stops the movement ceases. But the wet nature remains undestroyed. Likewise, man's Mind, pure in its own nature, is stirred by the wind of ignorance. Both Mind and ignorance have no particular forms of their own and they are inseparable. Yet Mind is not mobile by nature, and if ignorance ceases, then the continuity [of deluded activities] ceases. But the essential nature of wisdom [i.e., the essence of Mind, like the wet nature of the water] remains undestroyed. (Hakeda 1967, 41)

Traditionally, the simile of the water and its waves is taken as a model of how enlightenment works. To begin with, it refers to the state in which we find ourselves: the state of non-enlightenment, in which Mind or ultimate reality (the water), originally formless, is fanned by ignorance (the wind). The

result is what Buddhism calls our compound consciousness, which is consciousness intermingled with the karmic elements of language and culture, as well as the dualistic, discriminatory world they create. The simile also implies a remedy for this situation: if ignorance (the wind) ceases, then Mind (the water) necessarily returns to its quiescent state, and compound consciousness (the waves) immediately disappears. In other words, all one need do to realize enlightenment is stop the winds of ignorance; with ignorance gone, compound consciousness disappears, its discriminatory function stops, and Mind reasserts itself in its pure, undefiled state.

Wŏnhyo adopts the water-and-wave simile as his own, using it as a kind of reference point throughout his commentary. His attraction to the image as a reflection of the enlightenment process is certainly in keeping with his pragmatic, practice-oriented focus. Yet from the vantage point of another thousand years of Buddhist history, the lurking dualism of the analogy is strikingly apparent. The water-and-waves simile depicts the unenlightened world of form and motion (the waves) as an error that must be erased in order to allow Mind (the water) to reappear in its true state, which is formless and undefined. The wind is bad, the waves are bad, and the water, which is good, is only truly itself when it is quiescent or formless.

This view is surprising given Wŏnhyo's general endorsement of the message of the *mom-momjit* paradigm. A more rigorously non-dual application of the paradigm would demonstrate the fundamental interpenetration of water and waves. It would depict water as *mom*, or essence, and the waves as *momjit* or essence-in-motion. Instead of emphasizing the *difference* between water and waves, it would stress their continuity, the obvious fact that, turbulent or not, waves are made of water.

This shift in emphasis is subtle but important, as it stresses the universality of *mom*, and its total interpenetration with all other aspects of reality, including *momjit*. Since *mom* completely interpenetrates *momjit*, it is in fact both essence and function, enlightenment and ignorance, water and wave. There is no need to "stop" the winds of ignorance in order to achieve enlightenment, because enlightenment is not something that can be "produced."

As enlightenment is nothing other than *mom*, it is always present and available.

For the practitioner, this change in emphasis has immense consequences: it effectively removes the dualistic opposition between the enlightened world of the Buddha and the unenlightened world of ordinary beings, between practice and living, and it removes the stigma from the temporal realm of turbulence and change which is *momjit*. *Momjit* is not “bad.” What is “bad” is our total immersion in *momjit*, and our ignorance of its origin in *mom*.

Of course, this more rigorously non-dual interpretation of the water-and-waves simile is based on the sudden enlightenment doctrine, brought to fruition only after Wōnhyo’s death by the *Chan* (K. *Son*, J. *Zen*) school. Yet its key element, the *tathāgata-garbha* or indwelling buddha-nature, can be found in the treatise, and was undoubtedly one of the reasons Wōnhyo was drawn to write his commentary on it. Indeed, Wōnhyo’s emphasis on the *tathāgata-garbha* (如來藏), on non-duality, on the concept of total interpenetration, which he took from the Huayan school, and on the *mom-momjit* paradigm, place him as a spiritual forefather of the sudden enlightenment doctrine and the Son school.

V. The “Attributes” of One Mind as the *Mom* in *Momjit*

Let us turn our attention to Wōnhyo’s discussion of chapter two of the treatise, which I translate as “Proclamation of the Doctrine.” In this chapter, the treatise briefly outlines the two aspects of *Mahāyāna*, what it calls the dharma aspect and the significance (義, K. *ūi*, Ch. *i*) aspect. Of course, the word *Mahāyāna* here refers not to *Mahāyāna* Buddhism but to the absolute, or Suchness.

The treatise equates the dharma aspect of *Mahāyāna* with the One Mind of all sentient beings, which can also be called essence, *t’i*, or *mom*. The dharma aspect is all-inclusive, containing both the temporal and non-temporal worlds. Chapter two of the treatise puts it this way:

This Mind includes in itself all states of being of the phenomenal world and the transcendental world. On the basis of this Mind, the meaning of *Mahāyāna* may be unfolded. Why? Because the absolute aspect of this Mind represents the essence (*svabhāva*) of *Mahāyāna*. (Hakeda 1967, 28)

Chapter two is very brief, and has the feel of an outline. After defining the dharma aspect in just a few lines, it immediately subdivides it into three other aspects: *t'i*, essence (體), *hsiang* (相), attributes, and *zung* (用), function (Hakeda translates this last as “influences”). It states in very concise terms, “The phenomenal aspect of this Mind represents the essence, attributes (*lakshana*) and influences (*kriya*) of *Mahāyāna* itself” (ibid., 28).

This tripartite construction of essence-attributes-function is new, of course, but the text doesn't bother to explain; it immediately jumps ahead to introduce the *other* aspect by which *Mahāyāna* or One Mind can be understood, the so-called significance aspect, which is the ordinary world of unenlightened beings. The significance aspect thus corresponds to the concept of function, *zung*, or my own term, *momjit*, and it too is subdivided into three parts, or what are generally called “The Three Greatnesses”:

Of the significance, there are three aspects: the “greatness” of the essence, for all phenomena (dharma) are identical to Suchness and are neither increasing nor decreasing; the “greatness” of the attributes, for the *Tathāgata-garbha* is endowed with numberless excellent qualities; the “greatness” of the influences, for the influences give rise to the good causes and effects in this and in the other world alike. (Hakeda 1967, 29-30)

What we see here, of course, is the same three-part structure of essence, *mom*, attributes, *hsiang*, and function, *momjit*, first mentioned in connection with the dharma aspect. Let us look at this new structure a little more closely.

The *mom-hsiang-momjit* construction makes its first appear in the treatise, and is thus one of its philosophical innovations. We are of course already familiar with the preexisting terms *mom* and *momjit*, and their meanings as essence and function. The middle term, *hsiang*, however, happens

to be new in this context, though it is used extensively elsewhere in Buddhist discourse. It is an important Buddhist technical term, usually used to mean “phenomenon,” and normally trans on the word’s preexisting association with the concept of the phenomenal, even as he borrows it for a new and innovative use.

In my view, that use is strictly secondary. The concept of attributes or marks, in this context, is meant as an aid to help the reader understand the relationship between essence and function, or between One Mind and the phenomenal world of unenlightened beings. It is not meant to carry the same weight or significance as the concepts of essence and function. Rather, it is meant to function as a kind of bridge or intermediary between the two.

The problem this bridge is meant to address is as old as religion itself, and is evident in religions other than Buddhism: If One Mind is unchanging and nontemporal, how can we identify its presence in the everchanging, temporal world of unenlightened beings? Usually, Buddhism addresses this question with highly abstract, philosophical language, talking, for example, about the “total interpenetration” of the enlightened and unenlightened worlds. Perhaps sensing the need for a more concrete explanation, the treatise introduces the idea of attributes—the “attributes” of One Mind as they can be seen and experienced in the temporal world. We can perhaps call these attributes the *mom* in *momjit*, in other words, the marks of essence as seen by unenlightened beings in the world of function.

Misunderstanding this usage, some contemporary Buddhologists have gone so far as to claim that the basic logic of the treatise (and of Wōnhyo’s Commentary) is not *mom-momjit* but *mom-hsiang-momjit*. I think this is simply a case of losing the forest in the trees. Hsiang is a special term denoting a particular aspect of *mom*, used as an aid to clarify the relationship between *mom* and *momjit* as experienced by sentient beings living in the temporal world. It is a conceptual bridge, an explanatory tool, not an independent category on a par with the concepts of essence and function. Now it is time to take a look at the factual events of Wōnhyo’s life, as well as present a brief summary and understanding of his ideas.

VI. Wŏnhyo's *Commentary on the Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*

Wŏnhyo's most influential work has been his *Kisillon so*, or *Commentary on the Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, also called the *Haedong so* (海東疏, Ch. *Hai-dong shu*), or "The Korean Commentary," the honorific title given it by the Chinese. The *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* is the seminal text of all of East Asian *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, as was mentioned in the first section of this introduction. It has been treasured in the East Asian tradition as a foremost synthesis of all major *Mahāyāna* Buddhist doctrines. Wŏnhyo's *Kisillon so* has been highly esteemed in China, Japan, and Korea as being one of the three most authoritative expositions on this treatise. The other two expositions were written by Fa-tsang (643-712), the third patriarch of Chinese Huayan Buddhism, and Huiyuan (523-92), the Huayan monk-scholar, both of whom were mentioned earlier. Evidence for the great importance placed upon Wŏnhyo's commentary is found in the *Kao-seng chuan* (高僧傳), which reports that when Ch'eng-kuan of Mt. Ching-liang (the fourth patriarch of the Chinese Huayan school) gave instruction on the meaning of Wŏnhyo's *Kisillon so*, he declared that it was superior to all others. Yet despite its excellence, Wŏnhyo's commentary on the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* is still relatively unknown, having been overshadowed by the work of Fa-tsang, though Fa-tsang himself made great use of many of Wŏnhyo's basic philosophical writings, including *Kisillon so*. In his *Kisillon so*, Wŏnhyo argued that the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* was originally a non-sectarian text revealing a key hermeneutical principle through which *hwajaeng* (和諍) and *t'ong pulgyo* (通佛教) could be achieved. This principle is contained in the Chinese *ti-yung* (K. *ch'e-yong*) or "essence-function" formula, which I am calling the *mom-momjit* paradigm (see the first section of this introduction). According to Wŏnhyo, by using the essence-function (or substance-operation) formula, all dialectical contradictions and polarized opposites such as 'the One and the many,' 'subject and object,' and '*nirvāna* and *samsāra*,' can be perfectly harmonized,

just as it is argued in the *Hwaōm gyōng* of *Hwaōm* Buddhism.

As was discussed briefly in the first section of this introduction, the aim of using the *mom-momjit* paradigm is to show the inseparability or non-duality of two apparently contradictory concepts. This *Mahāyāna* Buddhist formula contrasts with the dualistic *neng-so* (能所, K. *nūng-so*) or “subject-object” formulation usually used by the discriminating mind of sentient beings. For instance, the *Platform Sūtra*, which was also mentioned earlier, contains a famous analysis using the essence-function construction to illustrate the inseparability of ‘meditation’ (*dīng*, 定) and ‘wisdom’ (*hui*, 慧). According to *neng-so* construction, meditation must “precede” the attainment of wisdom; thus enlightenment becomes the “object” of practice. However, according to the *mom-momjit* construction of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, meditation and wisdom, or practice and enlightenment, are simultaneous and inseparable aspects of Buddha’s mind of non-discrimination. Thus, in the context of explaining his theory of “sudden enlightenment by sudden practice” (*tun-wu tun-hsiu*, 頓悟頓修) Huineng states:

Good friends, my teaching of the Dharma takes meditation and wisdom as its basis. Never, under any circumstances say that meditation and wisdom are different; they are a unity, not two things. Meditation is the essence of wisdom, wisdom itself is the function of meditation. At the very moment there is wisdom, meditation exists in wisdom. At the very moment there is meditation, wisdom exists in meditation. Good friends, this means that meditation and wisdom are alike. Students, be careful not to say that meditation gives rise to wisdom, or that wisdom gives rise to meditation, or that meditation and wisdom are different from one another. To hold this view implies that these things have duality. (Yampolsky 1967, 13:135)

This *sūtra* then describes the indivisible *mom-momjit* structure of meditation and wisdom in terms of the simile of the lamp (representing *mom*) and its light (representing *momjit*). Huineng continues:

Good friends, how then are meditation and wisdom alike? They are like the lamp and the light that it emanates. If there is a lamp there is light; if there is no lamp there is no light. The lamp is the

essence of light; the light is the function of the lamp. Thus, although they have two names, in essence they are not two. Meditation and wisdom are also like this. (ibid., 15:137)

Throughout his *Kisillon so*, the use of the *mom-momjit* hermeneutic device is the most characteristic feature of Wōnhyo's interpretation of the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. This can be seen from the very first paragraph of Wōnhyo's *Kisillon so* (H. 1, 698b, 733a; T. 44, 202a-b).

The dialectic of opening and sealing is clear in the first paragraph of the *Kisillon so*, "On Revealing the Essence of the Doctrine." For example, when Wōnhyo states, "One wants to call it [*Mahāyāna*] great, but it enters the interiorless and nothing remains," he is describing the process of sealing the truth (*mom*). However, when he states, "but it envelops the exteriorless without exhausting itself," he is describing the process of opening the truth (*momjit*). Again, the phrase "everything is empty because of it," represents sealing, while the phrase "yet myriad things arise through it," represents opening.

Wōnhyo then analyzes the *mom-momjit* structure of the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* in terms of this opening/sealing, doctrine/essence dialectic (H. 1, 698c, 733c; T. 44, 202a, 202b). *Mom*, representing the universal essence of One Mind, seals without diminishing, while *momjit*, representing the external function, opens into myriad phenomena without exhausting itself. These two aspects of essence and function, or sealing and opening, are both identical to One Mind and therefore freely interpenetrate without obstruction. Wōnhyo's *Kisillon so* systematically applies the essence-function soteriological formula, now understood in terms of the dialectical logic of sealing and opening, to nearly every problem raised by the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. At the beginning of the third section of his commentary, Wōnhyo interprets the first line of the invocation of the treatise, and divides the 'Buddha-treasure' (*buddha-ratna*, 佛寶) into two elements: (1) the merit of Buddha's mind; and (2) the merit of Buddha's body. He then subdivides each element into its essence and function. Using the essence/function formula, Wōnhyo then analyzes the text referring to the merit of Buddha's mind (H. 1, 700a, 700b, 745b; T. 44, 203b, 203c).

In this analysis, Wōnhyo utilizes the essence-function formula to portray the inseparability of the acts and wisdom of the Buddha. Here, enlightened wisdom, which comprehends ‘emptiness’ (*śūnyatā*, 空), is the Buddha’s internal essence, and the compassionate acts, which liberate all sentient beings, are the Buddha’s external function. Wōnhyo also applies the essence-function formula to analyze the Buddha’s body (H. 1, 735b). Here, in agreement with the teaching of *Hwaōm* Buddhism expounded in the *Hwaōm gyōng*, Wōnhyo identifies the internal essence of the Buddha’s body with ‘unimpededness’ or ‘non-obstruction’ and its external function with ‘complete freedom.’ In comparison, the Chinese commentaries, written by T’an-yen (探玄) and Huiyuan (慧遠) prior to Wōnhyo’s *Kisillon so*, did not use the essence-function formula while analyzing the passages under consideration. For example, T’an-yen believes that the phrase, “whose acts are most excellent and omniscient,” refers to the ‘truth-body’ (*dharmakāya*, 佛寶), and the phrase, “whose body is unimpeded and completely free,” refers to the ‘rewardbody’ (*sambhogakāya*, 報身). Huiyuan, in contrast, believes that the ‘acts’ and ‘omniscience’ in this phrase refer to the notion of the ‘marks of good fortune,’ and to the wisdom of the incarnate Buddha. While both of these interpretations analyze the virtues of the *Buddha-ratna* using different aspects of other wellknown Buddhist doctrines, such as *trikaya*, or the three-body theory, Wōnhyo illustrates the inseparability of the two seemingly different virtues through his *mom-momjit* hermeneutic device.

The ingenuity of Wōnhyo’s analysis of the Treatise on *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* is best reflected in his application of essence-function construction to the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist notion of ‘faith’ (Ch. xin). At one point in his *Kisillon so*, Wōnhyo uses *mom-momjit* construction as a hermeneutic device to interpret the meaning of the text’s title, *Dasheng qixin lun*. As discussed in the first section of this introduction, if the Chinese title is translated into English as the “Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in *Mahāyāna*” (as has been done by virtually all previous translators), the phrase ‘*Mahāyāna*’ (*Dasheng*)—a Sanskrit term meaning “Great Vehicle”—becomes the object of ‘awakening faith’ (*qixin lun*), thereby establishing a dualistic

subject-object structure wholly alien to the text, and to *Mahāyāna* Buddhism in general. Wōnhyo is careful to point out that *dasheng* is not the object of *qixin* but that ‘*Mahāyāna*’ represents an internal essence—One Mind or ‘the Mind of sentient beings’—while ‘faith’ represents its external function (H. 1, 735a).

Thus, he dispenses with the dualistic subject-object or ‘faith in’ construction, predominant in theistic religions, and replaces it with the *mom-momjit* formulation of faith, or ‘faith of.’ According to Wōnhyo, faith is simply the external function of One Mind, and the title of the *Dasheng qixin lun* simply means: “The naturally functioning mind,” “the properly operating mind,” or “the mind of faith.” Accordingly, the title of the treatise now reads: *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*.

An even more direct reading of the text’s title is achieved by simply following the natural order of the Chinese characters (*Dasheng qixin*), which means “*Mahāyāna* arouses faith,” or “Mind arouses faith”. This rendering is in agreement with one of the first sentences of the treatise which reads: “There is a principle that can arouse the root of *Mahāyāna* faith.” As the treatise then goes on to specify, the term “principle” here refers to One Mind, which is the Buddha’s enlightened Mind of non-discrimination, and the above sentence actually means: “There is a Mind which can arouse the root of *Mahāyāna* faith.” In this sentence, ‘Mind’ is *mom*, and ‘faith’ is its *momjit*, so that One Mind and faith cannot be separated. In his *Kisillon so*, Wōnhyo elaborates on this statement (H. 1, 737a).

Wōnhyo’s analysis of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist faith in terms of the essence-function formula, where One Mind is the essence and faith is the function, can be regarded as one of his most valuable contributions to Buddhist studies. In this analysis he demonstrates that faith does not actually require an external object as is assumed by the “faith in” construction of dualistic thinking. Instead, from the perspective of essence/function construction, an act of faith can be seen as a form of return to one’s own true mind (‘One Mind’). The contrast between the essence/function and subject/object structures of faith thus takes on crucial soteriological

implications. As I have argued at length in my book *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*, the subject/object structure of faith naturally posits that faith is merely a condition preliminary to enlightenment. However, according to the *mom-momjit* view, in which faith is perceived as the external operation of one's own mind, faith and enlightenment are simultaneous and inseparable. This implies that as soon as a resolute faith is awakened, the One Mind of Buddha is instantly realized. This is the conceptual leap that provides both the theoretical and practical basis for the doctrine of 'sudden enlightenment' developed later, for example, in Chinul's syncretic harmonization of *Hwaŏm* and *Son* Buddhism.

Wŏnhyo's doctrine concerning the inseparability of faith and enlightenment can further be examined in terms of the inseparability of faith and practice. Here, *mom* represents faith, while the dynamic *momjit* represents practice. Another unique feature of Wŏnhyo's thought is the emphasis he places on the need for faith to be manifested through diligence in meditation (*dhyāna*), compassion (*karuna*), and giving (*dana*). Wŏnhyo succinctly expresses the inseparability and simultaneity of faith and practice in his *Kisillon so* (H. 1, 737b).

In his commentary, Wŏnhyo then goes on to describe the characteristics of Mahāyāna faith using the 'essence-attributes-function' (*mom-sang-momjit*) formulation that appears in the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, essentially a variation on the basic essence-function construction described earlier. The treatise posits One Mind and then divides it into the following: (1) the absolute dimension of One Mind; and (2) the phenomenal dimension of One Mind. Then it explains the dimensions of One Mind in terms of the 'Three Greatnesses' (*mom*, *sang*, and *momjit*). Here, *mom* signifies the absolute dimension of One Mind, while *sang* and *momjit* denote different aspects of the phenomenal dimension. He then uses this essenceattributesfunctions formula to distinguish between three dimensions of *Mahāyāna* faith (H. 1, 734c).

In this analysis, Wŏnhyo defines faith as "a term which indicates being certain." Moreover, it is being certain of the following three truths: (1) One Mind exists; (2) practice gets results; and (3) when practice gets results, there

will be boundless merits. Faith as a form of certainty means the removal of all doubts and wrong attachments (H. 1, 736c). According to Wōnhyo, doubt of the dharma is eradicated by establishing the principle of One Mind; whereas doubt about method is eradicated by establishing the efficacy of practice.

Through the elimination of doubt and the attainment of certainty, one acquires the resolute confidence of ‘non-backsliding’ or ‘nonretrogressive’ faith, which means reaching the level of *niyata rasi*, or the “determined class,” the standard for the ‘perfection of faith’ established by the *Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. The first part of the treatise explains the principles of non-backsliding faith in terms of One Mind, its two dimensions, and the Three Greatnesses, for the benefit of those who have attained the level of *niyata rasi* or the “determined class.” Later, the treatise explains the principles of the second, lower level of faith, or the ‘faith of those who have not yet returned to One Mind’. This concept of a second level of faith, or a backsliding faith belonging to those who are still at the level of *aniyata rasi*, or the “undetermined class,” originates in the theory of four faiths and five practices found in chapter four of the treatise, “On Faith and Practice.” The beginning of chapter four reads: “We will now present a discussion of faith and practice. This discussion is intended for those who have not yet joined *niyata rasi*, or the determined class.” Thus, we know this second kind of faith refers to those who are still in a retrogressive state and can “fall back” at any time. Concerning those in this state, the treatise asks: “What kind of faith (should they have), and how should they practice it?” The response follows:

Briefly speaking, there are four faiths. What are they? The first is to believe in the Ultimate Source, or to be mindful, with the utmost willingness, of the principle of Suchness. The second is to believe that the Buddha has innumerable excellent virtues, or to think always of being close to Buddha, to make offerings to him, and to respect him. Furthermore, it means to awaken the capacity for goodness, which means wishing to have the omniscience that the Buddha has. The third is to believe that the Dharma is the source of great benefits, or to always think of practicing all of the perfections. The

fourth is to believe that the Sangha is able to correctly practice the *Mahāyāna* ideal of benefitting both oneself and others, or to rejoice always in being close to the assembly of Bodhisattvas and to pursue genuine practice as it does. (H. 1, 780b; Hakeda 1967, 92-93)

Thus, the ‘four faiths’ described by the treatise consist of faith in Suchness, followed by faith in the Three Jewels, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Traditionally, it has been believed that establishing a deep faith in the Three Jewels is the very foundation of Buddhist religious life, but this treatise is unique in that it adds another aspect of faith, namely, a deep faith in the principle of Suchness.

One of the great contributions Wōnhyo’s commentary on the treatise makes is the clarification that this secondary mode of faith—the affirmation of both Suchness and the Three Jewels—is itself only an externalized and symbolic form of the primary mode of faith—the affirmation of One Mind and the Three Greatnesses. Rhi Ki-yong (Yi Ki-yong), a scholar of Wōnhyo’s philosophy and the author of a book entitled, *Wōnhyo sasang* (Wōnhyo’s thought), provides a valuable synopsis of Wōnhyo’s doctrine of returning to the Three Jewels (*triratna*), and the central role it plays in his system of thought:

At the crux of Buddhism is the “three surrenders to the Three Jewels (*triratna*).” The shortest path to Wōnhyo’s Buddhist thought is to delve into his conception of *triratna*—the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The invocation in the *Taesung kisillon so* offers the following characteristics of his thought: (1) Buddhism consists of returning to the *triratna* and depending on them; (2) The Three Jewels are nothing but the external expression of *ilsim* (One Mind); (3) The object of what Wōnhyo thought of as religion is One Mind, the external expression of which is the *triratna*. (Rhi 1967, 54-56)

Rhi adds that Wōnhyo’s doctrine of returning to the *triratna* is an example of his principles of *hwajaeng* and *wollyung* (interpenetration) because it reconciles the Hinayanist view of the Three Jewels, which considers them to be real objects of faith, with the *Mahāyanist* view, which emphasizes the interiority or internalization of *triratna*. Rhi concludes:

Among *Mahāyanists*, Wōnhyo is particularly emphatic on this point. His profound understanding of the essential nature of *triratna* is explicit in the explanation of the *trisarana* (three returnings), he gives in his first invocation of the *Taesung Kisillon so*: ‘that which the One Mind returns to is but the *triratna*.’ This is an important contribution to the *Mahāyanist* understanding of *triratna*. (ibid., 58)

According to Wōnhyo, those at the level of *aniyata rasi*, who have a backsliding faith, are attached to the dualistic *neng-so* (faith in ___) framework; consequently, they mistakenly externalize the *triratna* as “objects” of faith. Wōnhyo considers this to be the same level of faith achieved by *HinaYāna* Buddhism. However, those at the level of *niyata rasi*, who have a non-backsliding faith, are governed by the non-dualistic *mom-momjit* (“faith-of”) construction, according to which faith does not require an object, but instead is the natural operation of one’s own mind. Wōnhyo considers this to be the level of faith realized in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. At this level, the secondary faith directed outward to Suchness and the Three Jewels is recognized as an externalized objectification of primary faith, which is directed inward to One Mind and the Three Greatnesses. In Wōnhyo’s view, Buddha represents *mom* (essence) at the absolute level of One Mind, while Dharma is *sang* (attribute), and Sangha is *momjit* (function) at the phenomenal level of One Mind. Thus, according to Wōnhyo’s principle of *hwajaeng*, the Three Greatnesses (Essence, Attributes, and Functions), and the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), signify the “inner” and “outer” dimensions of One Mind, and ultimately are identical in both structure and content.

Finally, at the end of chapter four, is a brief discussion of a third level of faith, faith in Amitābha Buddha, which is prescribed for those who are incapable of practicing the secondary mode of faith, namely, faith in Suchness and the Three Jewels. For the class of sentient beings who lack the ability to practice the highest kind of faith, the practice of *yōmbul*, or reciting Amitābha’s name while wishing for rebirth in the Pure Land of Great Bliss in the Western Paradise, is recommended as the best means of self-cultivation.

Abbreviations

- H* *Han'guk Pulgyo Chōnsō* (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* *Taishō Shinshu Daizōkyō* (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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