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Wŏnhyo's Views on the Buddha-nature of Insentient Things as Presented in the *Yŏlban chongyo**

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Abstract

The problem of whether insentient things, such as fences, walls, tiles and stones or grass, trees, mountains and rivers have Buddha-nature was at the center of controversies among Chinese Buddhist schools, such as Tiantai or Huayan. This problem was a much discussed subject in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, and later made a further impact beyond the boundaries of Buddhism. This article explores Silla Buddhists' position with respect to this issue, by examining Wŏnhyo's 元曉 (617~686) Yŏlban chongyo 涅槃宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the Nirvana Sutra).

Wŏnhyo's theory of the Buddha-nature of insentient things contains two important points: First, Wŏnhyo inherited Jingying Huiyuan's doctrine of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body and asserted that the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body abides in both sentient and insentient things, while the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body exists only in sentient beings, but not in insentient things, such as fences, walls, tiles, and stones. Second, Wŏnhyo defined the essence of Buddha-nature as the one mind and defined the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body respectively as the realm of intrinsic purity and the realm that accords with impurity. He demonstrated the relationship between the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body by using the logic of the one mind and the two approaches, thereby reconciling the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body of insentient things with that of the Reward Body of sentient beings on the basis of the one mind. Such a way in which the notion of conditioned arising of the tathāgatagarbha and the theory of Dharma nature are combined with each other constitutes the main feature of Wŏnhyo's position on Buddha-nature. Wŏnhyo inherited Jingying Huiyuan's and Jiaxing Jizang's views on the one hand, and displayed his originality in demonstrating the Buddha-nature of insentient things from the position of the conditioned arising of the tathāgatagarbha.

Key words: Wŏnhyo 元曉, the Buddha-nature of insentient things, Yŏlban chongyo 涅槃宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the Nirvana Sutra), tathāgatagarbha, the One Mind

Introduction

The problem of whether insentient things, such as fences, walls, tiles and stones or grass, trees, mountains and rivers have Buddha-nature is a much discussed subject in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. This issue was at the center of controversies among Chinese Buddhist schools, such as Tiantai or Huayan, as presented in the Tiantai monk Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782) *Jin'gang bei* 金剛錐 (Adamantine Scalpel). In Japanese Buddhism, Annen 安然 (ca. 841–915) argued in the *Shinjō sōmoku jōbutsu shiki* 勘定草木成佛私記¹ that grass and trees could arouse the thought of enlightenment, continue to practice, and finally attain Buddhahood; and since then the theory of grass and trees attaining Buddhahood became doctrinally influential in the Japanese Tendai school. Afterward, this theory made a further impact beyond the boundaries of Buddhism in Japanese views on nature and aesthetics. This being the case, what was the position of Silla Buddhists, who also belonged to the East Asian Buddhist community, with respect to the issue of the Buddha-nature of insentient things?

Wŏnhyo deals with the issue of the Buddha-nature of insentient things in “The Meaning of Buddha-nature” (*Pulsŏng ūi* 佛性義) section of his commentary on the *Nirvana Sutra*, the *Yŏlban chongyo* 涅槃宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the *Nirvana Sutra*). In the *Nirvana Sutra*, Buddha-nature is described as universally abiding in all dharmas on the one hand, and as being confined to sentient beings with no relation to insentient things on the other hand. Regarding the seemingly contradictory descriptions of the *Nirvana Sutra*, traditional exegetes provided various distinct interpretations. In the *Yŏlban chongyo*, Wŏnhyo critically examined previous exegetes' views on the *Nirvana Sutra* and, based on this, he presented his own views on the theory of Buddha-nature of insentient things. This article explores Wŏnhyo's views on the theory of Buddha-nature of insentient things mainly based on his *Yŏlban chongyo*. It also analyzes the doctrinal significance of Wŏnhyo's views by comparing them to several Chinese commentators of the *Nirvana Sutra*, and thereby illuminates the features of Wŏnhyo's views on Buddha-nature.

Jingying Huiyuan and Jiexiang Jizang's Views on the Buddha-nature of Insentient Things

The “Kāśyapa” chapter of the *Nirvāna Sutra* contains an explanation of the differences between sentient beings and insentient things, such as fences, walls, tiles, and stones, in terms of Buddha-nature as follows:

O good son! In order to distinguish it from what is not nirvana, it is named nirvana; to distinguish it from what is not Tathāgata, it is named Tathāgata; to distinguish it from what is not Buddha-nature, it is named Buddha-nature. ... What is not Buddha-nature refers to insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones. Other [forms of] existence except insentient things are named Buddha-nature.²

According to this passage, Buddha-nature is a feature confined only to all sentient beings; insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones, do not have Buddha-nature. In the Chinese Buddhist tradition, there were distinct views regarding the implication of this passage, and these distinct views finally came to be established as the distinct doctrines of the Buddha-nature of insentient things.

Commenting on the phrase of the *Nirvāna Sutra* that insentient things are not Buddha-nature (*wuqing fei foxing* 無情非佛性), Sengliang 僧亮 (ca. 400–468), in his *Niepan jing jijie* 涅槃經集解, considered “the nature to be a different name for realization and understanding” (*xing shi wujie zhi bieming* 性是悟解之別名). He considered that insentient things do not have the nature of realization and understanding and, therefore, it is said in the sutra that insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones, are not Buddha-nature. In discussing the essence (*che*, Ch. *ti* 體) of Buddha-nature in the *Yōlban chongyo*, Wōnhyo mentioned six distinct views held by six historical exegetes.³ Fayun 法雲 of Guangzhaisi 光宅寺 (467–529), the second of the six exegetes, argued, “the nature of mind is the essence of the direct cause” (*xin xing wei zhengyinti* 心性為正因體), implying that living beings are not the same as trees and stones because they have the nature of abhorring suffering and seeking the pleasure [of nirvana], and therefore they have Buddha-nature. Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty 梁武帝 (467–549), the third exegete, argued, “mind and spirit are the essence of the direct cause” (*xinshen wei zhengyinti* 心神為正因體), implying that

a person's spiritual nature is Buddha-nature. The canonical basis of Emperor Wu's argument was none other than the passage of the *Nirvana Sutra*, that is, "what is not Buddha-nature refers to all insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones" (*fei foxingzhe, suowei yiqie qiangbiwashideng wuqing zhi wu* 非佛性者, 所謂一切牆壁瓦石等無情之物).⁴ Given these explanations, we can see that the Buddha-nature of insentient things was generally rejected by exegetes during the Southern and Northern dynasties.

In the works of Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠 (523–592) and Jiaxiang Jizang 嘉祥吉藏 (549–623), however, we find different interpretations regarding the phrase "insentient things are not Buddha-nature" (*wuqing fei foxing* 無情非佛性) in the *Nirvana Sutra*. The main reason for this change in interpreting the phrase is because the *Nirvana Sutra* itself contains seemingly contradictory descriptions regarding Buddha-nature. For instance, one place says "generally whoever has mind are all Buddha-nature" (*fanyou xin zhe xi shi foxing* 凡有心者悉是佛性), but in another place says "emptiness in its ultimate meaning is named Buddha-nature" (*diyi yi kong, ming wei foxing* 第一義空, 名為佛性). When based on the former phrase, the implication is that insentient things, which are not living beings, should not have Buddha-nature; based on the latter, however, all fences or walls and tiles and stones are also considered to have Buddha-nature. This being the case, which interpretation represents the real position of the *Nirvana Sutra*? The problem of how seemingly contradictory statements in the *Nirvana Sutra* regarding Buddha-nature can be explained consistently became a doctrinal task for Chinese Buddhist exegetes to solve. Jingying Huiyuan, for instance, in his *Niepan jing yiji* 涅槃經義記 (Commentary on the Nirvana Sutra) said:

Insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones, are not Buddha-nature. In order to distinguish it from non-Buddha-nature, Buddha-nature is stated to exist. The nature has two kinds. The first is the nature of cognitive subject, which refers to cognitive mind. Living beings are endowed with this true cognitive mind, whereas outer dharmas are not. Thus it was said in the above passage that generally Buddha-nature refers to living beings. Furthermore, where deluded mind exists, this true mind exists; where deluded mind does not exist, no real mind exists. Thus it is said in the above passage that generally all those who have mind have Buddha-nature. The second is the nature of cognitive object, which refers to all dharma teachings, such as

existence and non-existence, that is, the objects of cognition. This nature of cognitive object is applied to both the inner subject and the outer objects: it does not only exist in the subject. The currently discussed Buddha-nature is stated just in the first sense.⁵

In this passage, Jingying Huiyuan divides nature into two types, that is, the nature of cognitive subject and cognitive object, in terms of subject and object in cognition. He argues that among these two the nature of cognitive subject refers to the true cognitive mind. Since the nature of cognitive subject is confined only to sentient beings, Buddha-nature associated with the nature of cognitive subject exists only in sentient beings, not insentient things. The theory of the *Nirvana Sutra* that insentient things are not Buddha-nature is stated in terms of the nature of cognitive subject. By contrast, the nature of cognitive object refers to the nature of emptiness, of which such concepts as “dharma nature” (*faxing* 法性), “ultimate state” (*shiji* 實際), “real characteristics” (*shixiang* 實相), “characteristics of dharmas” (*faxiang* 法相), “emptiness in its ultimate meaning” (*diyì yì kōng* 第一義空) have the implication, and correspond to the concept of “the nature of Dharma Buddha” (*fafō xing* 法佛性), which I will discuss below. The nature of cognitive object universally exists in all dharmas and, therefore, in this sense Buddha-nature exists in not only sentient beings but also insentient things.

Jiexiang Jizang’s views are very similar to Jingying Huiyuan’s. Jizang was also faced with the difficult question of how to reconcile and unify the two seemingly contradictory descriptions in Mahāyāna scriptures on Buddha-nature: universality and particularity. In his *Dasheng xuan lun* 大乘玄論 (Treatise on the Mysteries of the Mahāyāna), Jizang explains Buddha-nature from two distinct perspectives, a “comprehensive approach” (*tongmen* 通門) and a “particular approach” (*biemen* 別門). He explains the comprehensive approach as follows:

Besides, the *Nirvana Sutra*’s statement that each and every dharma contains the nature of peace and happiness also clearly expresses it. The *Weishi lun* states that all dharmas are only manifestations of people’s consciousness and no real external objects exist beside this. This explains that mountains, rivers, grasses and trees are all concepts of mind and no separate dharma exists beside the mind and consciousness. This phrase explains that in the level of principle, the external objects, the dependent reward (*yibao* 依報) of all dharmas and sentient

beings, the direct rewards (*zhengbao* 正報) of those, are fundamentally not differentiated. Given that the two are fundamentally not differentiated, when sentient beings have Buddha-nature, grasses and trees have it as well. In this regard, not only sentient beings but also grasses and trees have Buddha-nature.⁶

In this passage, Jizang explains the principle that all dharmas are none other than consciousness; there is no separate dharma beside the mind; and that the dependent reward and the direct reward are not differentiated. The direct reward of sentient beings and the dependent reward of external objects have identical essence and are not separated from each other. Therefore, when one accepts that sentient beings have Buddha-nature, then mountains, rivers, grasses and trees also necessarily should have it.

Compared to Jingying Huiyuan's doctrines of the nature of cognitive subject and cognitive object, Jizang's explanation of the Buddha-nature of grasses and trees on the basis of the notion that the dependent reward and the direct reward are not differentiated seems more persuasive.

Jizang certainly accepts not only the comprehensive approach but also the particular approach. Regarding the particular approach, Jizang says the following:

When considering it from the perspective of the particular approach, we will have a different conclusion. Why is this so? Living beings certainly have defilements in mind and thus they have a logical reason for realization and awakening. Grass and trees have no mind and thus have no defilements. How can they have a logical reason for realization and awakening? An analogy is as follows: Only when one has a dream, one can awaken from it; if one does not dream, no awakening would happen. For this reason, it is stated that living beings have Buddha-nature and thus may attain Buddhahood; grasses and trees have no Buddha-nature and thus cannot attain Buddhahood.⁷

The particular approach that Jizang mentions here emphasizes the view that only living beings have Buddha-nature among the two views stated in the sutras. Only when living beings exist, mind exists; only when mind exists, defilements exist; only when defilements exist, one can practice and become awakened. However, grass and trees have no mind, and cannot practice to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, they do not have Buddha-nature.

When examining the exegetical history of the *Nirvana Sutra* in China, we find that an absolute majority of exegetes who comment on the *Nirvana Sutra* categorized the concept of Buddha-nature. They incorporated the seemingly contradictory explanations of the *Nirvana Sutra* and other Mahāyāna scriptures regarding the Buddha-nature of insentient things into an integrated system of Buddha-nature theory, thereby resolving the contradiction between the universality (universally existing both in sentient and insentient things) and particularity (existing only in sentient beings) of Buddha-nature. Jingying Huiyuan's division into the nature of cognitive subject and the nature of cognitive object, or Jizang's theory of the comprehensive approach and the particular approach both accepted the existence of Buddha-nature of insentient things on certain levels.

The Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body and the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body in the *Yōlban chongyo*

In his *Yōlban chongyo*, Wōnhyo presents the following explanation of the phrase in the “Kāśyapa” chapter of the *Nirvana Sutra* “what is not Buddha-nature refers to insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones. Other [forms of] existence than insentient things are named Buddha-nature”:

In this phrase it is exactly explained what is the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body. In accordance with their defilements, living beings raise various thoughts. Although these thoughts are related to all three types of Buddha-nature, nature does not lose the abilities of realization and acknowledgement and thus is defined as the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body. In order just to distinguish it from the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body, which universally abides in all sentient and insentient things, it is said that the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body does not exist in insentient things such as grass and trees.⁸

In this passage, Wōnhyo differentiates the Buddha-nature between sentient and insentient things by using the concepts of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body, and asserts that the former abides in both sentient and insentient things, whereas the latter only in sentient beings.

Where do the concepts of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and

the Reward Body originate? Although Wŏnhyo himself does not mention it, these concepts trace back to Jingying Huiyuan:

There are two types of Buddha-nature: one is the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body and the other is the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body. The former refers to the cause of the naturally endowed lineage (*xingzong yin* 性種因), and the latter to the cause of the lineage conditioned by habits (*xizhong yin* 習種因). How are the two natures distinguished from each other? The Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body is the essence with which all dharmas are originally endowed. When a living being attains Buddhahood, there is neither an increasing nor decreasing of this essence. What was previously hidden has been manifested now; what was previously defiled has been purified now. The Buddha-nature of the Reward Body originally has no dharma-essence, and it is only the feature that is attained through practice.⁹

In Chinese Buddhist history, Huiyuan explained two distinct meanings of the Buddha-nature through the concepts of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body. We should note here that Huiyuan introduced these concepts not when explaining the relationship between sentient and insentient things, but when commenting on the revealing cause (*liaoyin* 了因) and the generative cause (*shengyin* 生因) stated in the *Nirvana Sutra*. In other words, only the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body can generate the nirvana, and is thus called the generative cause of nirvana; the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body between ordinary people and saints does not fundamentally differ and the only difference between them lies in whether it is hidden or manifested. Huiyuan described the relationship between the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body and nirvana by using the analogy of gold hidden in ore and refined gold; the relationship between the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body and nirvana by the analogy of gold hidden in ore and various ornamental dharma-instruments made with gold. The former implies the relationship between pure and impure, or a hidden and manifested condition; the latter that generates and what is generated. Some says that the former is the ontological concept and the latter the genetic concept.¹⁰

By broadening such an explanation by Huiyuan, Wŏnhyo differentiated the meanings of the Buddha-nature between sentient and insentient things. Thus it may be said that Wŏnhyo contributed to the process of enriching the

significances of the two notions.

Some of Wŏnhyo's views on the Buddha-nature of insentient things are similar to Jizang's. As mentioned above, in the *Dasheng xuan lun* Jizang divided the theories of Buddha-nature found in various Mahāyāna texts into two approaches: the comprehensive approach and the particular approach. He emphasized that insentient things have Buddha-nature from the perspective of the comprehensive approach and demonstrated it by citing the *Weishi lun*. We see a similar explanation in Wŏnhyo's *Yŏlban chongyo*:

Question: As stated in the passage in the *Nirvana Sutra*, which is quoted in the "Essence and Characteristics" section (*chèsang mun* 體相門), what is not Buddha-nature refers to all insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones. Besides, it is stated in the "Kāśyapa" chapter that some say that Buddha-nature is the result of abiding in the five aggregates (*oŭm* 五陰) and others say that the nature of Buddha-nature has nothing to with the five aggregates and thus it is like empty space. Therefore, the Tathāgata taught that Buddha-nature is the middle-way. The Buddha-nature of sentient beings not just exists in the six sense faculties (*naeyugip* 內六入), nor does in the six types of sensory signals from outside (*oeyugip* 外六入). It is formed by the integration of the sense faculties and sensory signals and, therefore, it is called the middle-way. According to the phrase in the "Kāśyapa" chapter, such things as tiles or stones are categorized as sensory signals from outside and thus they are Buddha-nature. The two phrases seem contradictory to each other. How can they be reconciled?

One who is versed in the meaning of the Buddha-nature explains it, saying: when based on the approach in which sentient beings are distinct from insentient things (*yujŏng mujŏng imun* 有情無情異門) such as grasses and trees, such things as tiles or stones are not called Buddha-nature; when based on the approach in which all dharmas are only manifestations by the transformation of consciousness (*yusik sobyŏn hyŏnmmun* 唯識所變現門), the inner faculties and outer signals are not distinguished from each other and the two are integrated to form Buddha-nature.¹¹

In this passage, Wŏnhyo also explains the phrase of the *Nirvana Sutra* by dividing it into two approaches, that is, the approach in which sentient beings are distinct from insentient things and the approach in which all dharmas are only manifestations by the transformation of consciousness. In the former

approach, insentient things such as tiles or stones cannot be called Buddha-nature, whereas in the latter insentient and sentient beings are both called Buddha-nature. Just as Jizang does, Wŏnhyo here presents Yogācāra theory as the doctrinal evidence for the Buddha-nature of insentient things. All dharmas are manifestations by transformation of consciousness, and the subjective world of mind and consciousness and the outer world of insentient things are fundamentally of the identical essence and not separated from each other (*ilch'e mui* 一體無二). Therefore, when one accepts that sentient beings have Buddha-nature, insentient things also have Buddha-nature.

The Logic of the *Awakening of Faith* and the Buddha-nature of Insentient Things

To summarize what has been discussed above, Jingying Huiyuan affirmed the Buddha-nature of insentient things mainly in order to present the significance of Buddha-nature on the level of the ultimate reality, such as “Dharma-nature” (*faxing* 法性), “Dharma realm” (*fajie* 法界), “the nature of emptiness” (*kongxing* 空性), “ultimate state” (*sbiji* 實際), in the broader interpretation of the concept. He thereby overcame the view that Buddha-nature is confined to sentient beings only and consistently explained the seemingly contradictory explanations regarding Buddha-nature in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Such concepts as “Dharma nature,” “Dharma realm,” “the nature of emptiness,” “ultimate state” originally appear in scriptures, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* and the *Dazhidu lun* (**Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra*). Given this, we can see that Jingying Huiyuan referred to Madhyamaka doctrines in the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness (*dasheng kongzong* 大乘空宗) in explicating the significance of Buddha-nature.

Jiexiang Jizang's demonstration, however, that Buddha-nature exists not only in sentient beings but also insentient things begins from the theory that the dependent reward and the direct reward are indivisible (*yizheng buer* 依正不二). This implies that Jizang's interpretation of the Buddha contains doctrinal elements of the Mahāyāna teaching of existence (*dasheng youzong* 大乘有宗).

Wŏnhyo explains the existence of the Buddha-nature of insentient things by using the concepts of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body, which originated with Huiyuan. He established the concept of the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body beside the generally-accepted concept

of the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body, and accepted that insentient things have Buddha-nature in terms of the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body. On the other hand, Wŏnhyo demonstrates that the “inside” (*nae* 內) and the “outside” (*ae* 外) are not differentiated from each other from the perspective of Yogācāra doctrine, which thus leads to the conclusion that insentient things have Buddha-nature. We may see that Wŏnhyo mostly referred to Jingying Huiyuan and Jiaxiang Jizang’s views, and the logic and conclusion that Wŏnhyo established are largely similar to theirs.

What then is the relationship between the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body? Are they separated or interrelated? Regarding this problem, Jingying Huiyuan explains from the doctrinal perspective of the conditioned arising of the *tathāgatagarbha* (*rulaizang yuanqi* 如來藏緣起):

There are two types of causes. One is the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body, and the other is the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body. The essence of the *tathāgatagarbha* is the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body, while that the Reward Body may arise on the basis of the essence is called the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body.¹²

In other words, the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body correspond to respectively the essence and function of *tathāgatagarbha*; they mutually correspond to each other, thereby are not separated from each other (*xiangji buli* 相即不離), and are of the identical essence and indivisible (*yiti buer* 一體不二). Although Huiyuan explained the relationship between the two, his focus was on the distinctions, not the connections, between them. In Huiyuan’s doctrinal system, the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and Reward Body are the paralleling concepts that have distinct characteristics. The dynamic as well as definitive relationship between them has not yet been discussed.

In the *Yŏlban chongyo*, Wŏnhyo takes note of the distinction between the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and Reward Body and, furthermore, discusses the relationship between them in relation to the theory of one mind and two gates (*ilsim imun* 一心二門) of the *Awakening of Faith*, and, as a result, the doctrinal aspects of the Buddha-nature of insentient things has been more clearly demonstrated.

Wŏnhyo first defines the essence of Buddha-nature (*pulsŏng chi chŏ* 佛性之體)

as the one mind (*ilsim* 一心). The one mind refers to ultimate reality, not the mind or consciousness of sentient beings. Therefore, Wŏnhyo declares that “the nature of the one mind is the freedom from all extremes” (*ilsim chi sŏng, wŏn ri chebyŏn* 一心之性, 遠離諸邊); it is not given any concrete feature. Because the one mind does not have any given concrete feature, it can serve as the basis on which all dharmas exist and can be manifested as any kind of features in accordance of various kinds of condition. Wŏnhyo describes the transcendence and the reality of the one mind as respectively “undefiled, and yet defiled” (*pyŏm i yŏm* 不染而染) and “defiled, and yet undefiled” (*yŏm i pyŏm* 染而不染).

More specifically, among the six historical exegetes' views on Buddha-nature, which are presented in the *Yŏlban chongyo*, the sixth view of “the Buddha-nature of Thusness” (*chinyŏ pulsŏng* 真如佛性) refers to none other than the one mind or the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body, which are concepts of the same level as the Dharma nature, the ultimate state, or the nature of emptiness, and so on. The “nature of divine understanding” (*sinhae chi sŏng* 神解之性), the fourth exegete's view of the remaining five, for Wŏnhyo, has the implication that even though the mind that accords with defilements appears as consciousness arising and ceasing, it never loses the nature of divine understanding. The “nature of being weary of suffering and seeking pleasure” (*yŏmgo kurak chi sŏng* 厭苦求樂之性), the third exegete's view, indicates the two kinds of karma that the arising and ceasing mind generates by power of the inner permeation. As such, the one mind, namely, the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body, and the mind and consciousness of sentient beings, namely the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body, are not isolated from each other, but are of the identical essence and are indivisible.

Moreover, Wŏnhyo associates the concepts of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body to the respective realms of “intrinsic purity” (*sŏngjŏng mun* 性淨門) and “according with impurity” (*suyŏm mun* 隨染門), and argues that the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body refers to the pure nature of sentient beings, whereas the Buddha-nature of Reward Body to the nature of essence with defilements in accordance with conditions:

The Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body in the realm of intrinsic purity; the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body in the realm of according with impurity. For instance, it is stated in the “Bodhisattva Lion's Roar” chapter, “Good man! The cause of nirvana that I broadly explained is based on the nature of

Buddha-nature, which does not create nirvana. Therefore it does not have a cause (*muin* 無因). This Buddha-nature can destroy defilements and thus is called the “great result” (*taegwa* 大果). It is not created by practice, and thus it is called “no-result” (*mugwa* 無果). In this sense, nirvana neither has a cause nor is a result.” This passage explains the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body in its hidden and manifest aspects. The hidden aspect is the cause, and the manifest aspect is the result. It is said in the “Kāśyapa” chapter, “Buddha-nature can neither be called one kind of existence, nor innumerable kinds of existence. When anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi (*anu pori* 阿耨菩提) has not been attained, all wholesome, unwholesome and neutral dharmas can be called Buddha-nature. What cannot be called Buddha-nature refers to all [forms of] existence that have no consciousness, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones. Those beside such [forms of] existence are called Buddha-nature.”¹³

In this passage, Wōnhyo explains the relationship between the Buddha-natures of Dharma Body and Reward Body by using the logic of the one mind and two approaches of the *Awakening of Faith*. The Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body belongs to the realm of the intrinsic purity, which corresponds to the approach of Thusness; the Buddha-nature of Reward Body to the realm of the accordance with the impurity, which corresponds to the approach of according with conditions (*suyōn mun* 隨緣門). Just as the one mind of the *Awakening of Faith* evolved into the approaches of Thusness and according with conditions, Buddha-nature is divided into two types: the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body. In his *Kisillon so* 起信論疏, Wōnhyo defines the one mind as Buddha-nature and *tathāgatagarbha*. Therefore, we see that Wōnhyo introduces the logic of the *Awakening of Faith* in interpreting the theory of Buddha-nature in the *Nirvana Sutra*.

Comparison to Fabao, Fazang, Chengguan’s Interpretations of the Buddha-nature of Insentient Things

After the time of Jingying Huiyuan and Jizang, the problem of the Buddha-nature of insentient things continued to draw attention from Buddhist exegetes as one of several issues discussed widely among several Buddhist schools during the Tang dynasty (618–907). Fabao 法寶 (627–705?), a figure of

the early Tang period, for instance, asserts the following in his *Yisheng foxing jiuqing lun* 一乘佛性究竟論:

Question: If Thusness is called Buddha-nature because it is the essence of the Buddha, the Thusness of all dharmas, which does not have consciousness, would be also the essence of the Buddha. If it is named Buddha-nature because it is the cause of Buddhahood, the Thusness of all dharmas, which does not have consciousness, would be also the cause of Buddhahood. If it is called Buddha-nature because it is endowed with wholesome virtues, the Thusness of all dharmas, which does not have consciousness, would have wholesome virtues. Why are sentient beings said to have Buddha-nature and insentient things not said so?¹⁴

The problem in this passage is as follows: If sentient beings and insentient things are equal from the perspective of Thusness, then the Thusness of insentient things could be called the essence of the Buddha or the cause of Buddhahood, and could be endowed with wholesome virtues. How then can it be said that sentient beings have Buddha-nature and insentient things do not? Although Fabao does not exactly specify the problem implied in the question, it is certain that it is related to the interpretation of the passage, “what is not Buddha-nature refers to all insentient things, such as fences or walls and tiles or stones,” in the “Kāśyapa” chapter of the *Nirvāna Sutra*.

Fabao explains this problem from the multiple perspectives of “the ultimate” (*zhen* 眞, lit. “the truth”) and “the conventional” (*su* 俗), and “Thusness” (*ru* 如) and “dharmas” (*fa* 法). The ultimate refers to the true basis of all dharmas; the conventional means the rules of each dharma. From the perspective of the ultimate there is no difference between material and immaterial things, or sentient and insentient things; they are all fundamentally Thusness. However, from the perspective of the conventional, material and immaterial things, sentient beings and the Buddha, or sentient and insentient things are differentiated from each other. When all dharmas are viewed from the perspective of Thusness, they interpenetrate each other and endlessly interrelated just like Indra’s Net. On the basis of Buddha-nature, not only sentient beings but also insentient things are named Buddha-nature.¹⁵

Fabao’s interpretation of the Buddha-nature of insentient things on the whole did not surpass that of Jiexiang Jizang. Fabao’s doctrine of the ultimate

and the conventional, which corresponds respectively to Jizang's approach of the comprehensive and the particular approach, reduced the problem of whether the Buddha-nature of insentient things exists or not to the issue of perspective on all dharmas. From the perspective of the ultimate, sentient and insentient things are not discriminated and, on this line, insentient things can be named Buddha-nature; from the perspective of the conventional, they are distinguished from each other and insentient things are not named Buddha-nature. Fabao did not carefully consider the relationship between the ultimate and the conventional or Thusness and dharmas, and thus did not provide a doctrinally systematic interpretation of the commonality and difference between sentient and insentient things.

Fabao's doctrinal creativity lies in his unique interpretation of multiple meanings of Buddha-nature:

Although Thusness is only one, it has different names according to different perspectives. When viewed from the perspective that the Reward Body of all the buddhas in ten directions are Buddha-nature, it is a "dependent compound" (*shuzhu shi* 屬主釋; Skt. *tatpuruṣa*); from the perspective that the Dharma Body is Buddha-nature, it is an "activity-based compound" (*chiye shi* 持業釋; Skt. *karmadhāraya*); from the perspective that all sentient being are Buddha-nature, it is a "possession compound" (*youcai shi* 有財釋; Skt. *bahuvrīhi*), by which sentient beings of causal status attain the name of the resultant status. Therefore, from the perspective of insentient things it is not Buddha-nature because they cannot attain Buddhahood by training.¹⁶

In his passage, Fabao first distinguishes several types of implications regarding Buddha-nature. Among the six types of rules in determining a term, Buddha-nature in regard to the Buddha of Reward Body is categorized as a dependent compound, in which Buddha-nature means the nature of the Buddha of the Reward Body; Buddha-nature in regard to the Buddha of the Dharma Body is categorized as an activity-based compound, in which Buddha-nature means nature created by the Dharma Body; Buddha-nature in regard to sentient beings is categorized as a possession compound in which sentient beings have the essence and cause of Buddhahood. Insentient things do not have the result of Buddhahood and, thus, are called what is not Buddha-nature.

In general, Buddha-nature is the concept that is related to the Buddhist

theory of practice and soteriology. From the perspective of soteriology, insentient things do not have Buddha-nature because such things as fences or walls and tiles or stones cannot attain Buddhahood by training. Although such exegetes as Jiexiang Jizang accepts the existence of the Buddha-nature of insentient things in a certain sense, he clearly denies that insentient things can attain the Buddhahood.¹⁷ Fabao also assumes a negative position regarding this problem. Although Fabao agrees with the Buddha-nature of insentient things from the perspective of the ultimate, he says that in terms of soteriology insentient things cannot attain Buddhahood by training and, thus, they are not Buddha-nature.

Although Fabao presented the concepts of the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body (*baoshen foxing* 報身佛性) and the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body (*fashen foxing* 法身佛性), these concepts do not seem to be doctrinally related to the concepts of Buddha-nature of the Reward Body and Dharma Body by Jingying Huiyuan and Wŏnhyo. This is because Fabao neither interpreted the two concepts as intrinsically related, nor did he use these two concepts in analyzing the relationship between the Buddha-natures of sentient and insentient things. Rather, the Huayan exegete Chengguan's 澄觀 (738–839) concepts of Dharma nature and Buddha-nature are similar to Wŏnhyo's concepts of the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body and Reward Body in terms of the doctrinal connection,

Dharma nature and Buddha-nature first appear as a pair in Fazang's 法藏 (643–712) *Qixinglun yiji* 起信論義記:

Dharma nature explains the universal meaning of this true essence. It refers to not only the essence of the jewel of the Buddha (*fobao* 佛寶), but also the Dharma nature of all dharmas. In other words, what it means is that Thusness universally exists in all defilements and realizations, and also exists in all sentient beings with consciousness and all things without consciousness; thereby representing the universality and transcendence of Thusness. *The Awakening of Faith* states, "Thusness is called Buddha-nature for all types of sentient beings and called Dharma nature for all types of insentient things."¹⁸

Although Fazang presents the paired concept of the Dharma nature and Buddha nature by using the interpretation of the *Awakening of Faith*, his point in this passage lies in the Dharma nature in the sense of Thusness; in other

words, he emphasizes Buddha-nature as another expression of Dharma nature, not the distinction between them.

Fazang explains the problem of the Buddha-nature of insentient things in terms of the doctrinal taxonomy (*jiaopan* 教判) that the teaching of Three Vehicles (*sanshengjiao* 三乘教) and the perfect teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教) have distinct positions. According to the teaching of the Three Vehicles, although Buddha-nature as Thusness universally exists in all sentient and insentient things, the attainment of Buddhahood is confined to sentient beings only; the attainment of Buddhahood by insentient things is repudiated. However, in the perfect teaching, Buddha-nature and the arising of the nature are applied to both sentient and insentient things; Buddha-nature not only exists universally in both sentient and insentient things, but insentient things can also attain the Buddhahood. This is what Fazang means by saying, “the attainment of Buddhahood is fully endowed in the three world systems (*sanshijian* 三世間).” In other words, the attainment of Buddhahood happens in not only the world of wisdom and full awakening (*zhizhengjue shijian* 智正覺世間), the world of sentient beings (*youqing shijian* 有情世間), but also the world as a vessel (*qi shijian* 器世間).¹⁹ The affirmation that insentient things can attain Buddhahood may be regarded as representing an outstanding development of the Buddha-nature theory in Chinese Buddhist history.

Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839) inherited Fazang’s interpretation of the Dharma nature and Buddha-nature. Unlike Fazang, however, Chengguan did not consider both of the concepts as the nature of Thusness. Rather, he emphasized the distinctions between them and asserted that insentient things do not have Buddha-nature:

The *Dazhidu lun* states: “for insentient things it is called Dharma nature; for sentient beings it is called Buddha-nature.” We clearly see that insentient things do not have the nature of awakening. Therefore, it should be explained that when the nature accords with conditions, sentient and insentient things differ; and thus their natures will be differentiated, just as nirvana, and so forth, do. When depending on the nature by extinguishing the conditions, it is neither awakening nor unawakening.²⁰

Fazang differentiated between Dharma nature and Buddha-nature by citing the interpretation of “the treatise,” but he did not clearly mention what this

treatise was. In the *Yanyi chao* 演義鈔, Chengguan declared that the treatise referred to the *Dazhidu lun*. However, this passage does not appear in the *Dazhidu lun*, and afterwards the Tiantai school criticized the Huayan theory of Buddha-nature on the basis of this fact. Chengguan, however, inherited this doctrine from Fazang although it has no canonical basis, and attempted to demonstrate that sentient and insentient things differed in regard to Buddha-nature. This is a unique feature of Chengguan's theory of Buddha-nature. Although his doctrines of Dharma nature and Buddha-nature are different from Wŏnhyo's doctrine of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and Reward Body, both doctrines are presented to demonstrate the existence or non-existence of the Buddha-nature of insentient things by clarifying the implications of Buddha-nature. Furthermore, the two exegetes are very similar in their ways of thinking. Given that Chengguan significantly cites Wŏnhyo's works, it is very likely that Chengguan's concepts of Dharma nature and Buddha-nature were influenced by Wŏnhyo's views.

Conclusion

In summary, Wŏnhyo's theory of the Buddha-nature of insentient things contains two important points: First, Wŏnhyo inherited Jingying Huiyuan's doctrine of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body and asserted that the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body abides in both sentient and insentient things, while the Buddha-nature of the Reward Body exists only in sentient beings, but not in insentient things, such as fences, walls, tiles, and stones. Second, Wŏnhyo defined the essence of Buddha-nature as the one mind and defined the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body respectively as the realm of intrinsic purity and the realm that accords with impurity. He demonstrated the relationship between the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body by using the logic of the one mind and the two approaches, thereby reconciling the Buddha-nature of the Dharma Body of insentient things with that of the Reward Body of sentient beings on the basis of the one mind. Such a way in which the notion of conditioned arising of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the theory of Dharma nature are combined with each other constitutes the main feature of Wŏnhyo's position on Buddha-nature.

Jingying Huiyuan demonstrated the existence of the Buddha-nature of insentient things from the position of the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness, namely, the position of the nature of emptiness, such as the Dharma realm, Dharma nature, Thusness, or the ultimate state. Jiexiang Jizang demonstrated the existence of the Buddha-nature of insentient things largely from a Yogācāra standpoint; more precisely, from the perspective of “only-consciousness and no-objects” (*weishi wujing* 唯識無境) and the dependent reward and the direct reward are indivisible (*yizheng buer* 依正不二). Wōnhyo inherited these two exegetes’ views on the one hand, and displayed his originality in demonstrating the Buddha-nature of insentient things from the position of the conditioned arising of the *tathāgatagarbha*.

During Tang dynasty, such exegetes as Fabao of the Nirvana school and Fazang and Chengguan of the Huayan school were interested in the issue of the Buddha-nature of insentient things. Fabao presented an improved analysis of the implication of Buddha-nature and raised the problem of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body. However, his conceptual division of Buddha-nature into the two types does not seem to be related to the problem of the Buddha-nature of insentient things. Fazang discussed the problem in relation to his doctrinal taxonomy, arguing that in the level of the perfect teaching insentient things not only have the Buddha-nature but also can attain the Buddhahood. Chengguan’s doctrines of the Dharma nature and the Buddha-nature primarily inherited Fazang’s views. However, the way in which Chengguan differentiated the two concepts and analyzed the problem of the Buddha-nature of insentient things on the basis of these concepts is similar to Wōnhyo’s explanation of the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body. This is strongly indicative of doctrinal connections between Wōnhyo’s and Chengguan’s views.

Notes

* This paper as the result of the Renmin University's significant project, *A study on the History and Thought of Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* [《大乘起信》的思想史研究].

- 1 For recent research, see Sueki (2015).
- 2 善男子! 為非涅槃, 名為涅槃, 為非如來, 名為如來, 為非佛性, 名為佛性.非佛性者, 所謂一切牆壁、瓦石、無情之物, 離如是等無情之物, 是名佛性. *Niepan jing* 涅槃經, roll 37 (T 12, 581a17-23).
- 3 *Niepan jing jijie* 涅槃經集解, roll 68 (T 37, 598b).
- 4 *Yōlban chongyo* 涅槃宗要 (T 38, 249a-b).
- 5 牆壁瓦石, 無情之物, 非是佛性. 為簡此等非佛性故, 說性為有. 性有二種, 一能知性, 謂真識心. 此真識心, 眾生有之, 外法即無. 故上說言, 夫佛性者, 謂眾生也. 又, 妄心處, 有此真心, 無妄心處, 即無真心. 故上說言, 凡有心者, 悉有佛性. 二所知性, 所謂有無、非有無等一切法門. 此通內外, 不唯在內. 今此所論, 約初言耳. *Niepan jing yiji* 涅槃經義記 roll 10 (T 37, 884c5-12).
- 6 又『涅槃』云, 一切諸法中悉有安樂性, 亦是經文. 『唯識論』云, 唯識無境界. 明山河草木皆是心想, 心外無別法. 此明理內一切諸法依正不二. 以依正不二故, 眾生有佛性, 則草木有佛性. 以此義故, 不但眾生有佛性, 草木亦有佛性也. *Dasheng xuan lun* 大乘玄論 roll 3 (T 45, 40c10-15).
- 7 若論別門者, 則不得然. 何以故? 明眾生有心迷, 故得有覺悟之理. 草木無心, 故不迷, 寧得有覺悟之義? 喻如夢覺, 不夢則不覺. 以是義故, 云眾生有佛性, 故成佛, 草木無佛性, 故不成佛也. *Dasheng xuan lun* 大乘玄論 roll 3 (T 45, 40c23-27).
- 8 是文正明報佛之性. 以隨染動心, 雖通三性而亦不失神解之性故, 說此為報佛性. 但為簡別法佛性門遍一切有情無情, 是故於報佛性, 不取無情物也. *Yōlban chongyo* 涅槃宗要 (T 38, 250a12-15).
- 9 佛性有二, 一法佛性, 二報佛性. 法佛性者, 是性種因, 報佛性者, 是習種因. 二性何別? 法佛性者, 本有法體, 與彼果時, 體無增減. 唯有隱顯、淨穢為異. 報佛性者, 本無法體, 但有方便可生之義. *Dasheng yizhang* 大乘義章 roll 9 (T 44, 652b18-23).
- 10 Regarding the difference between the Buddha-natures of the Dharma Body and the Reward Body, Jingying Huiyuan says the following in the *Qixin lun yisbu*: 言智淨相者, 是法佛性也. 不增不減, 古今湛然, 非先染後淨, 名智淨. 言不思議業相者, 是報佛性也. 本無法體, 以不思議修習力故, 有始生義. 造作令成, 無而令有, 名不思議 (T 44, 184c15-19).
- 11 問. 如體相門所引文言, 非佛性者所謂一切牆壁瓦石無情之物. 又復迦葉品中說云, 或云佛性住五陰中果, 或言佛性性離陰而有, 猶如虛空. 是故如來說於中道. 眾生佛性非內六入, 非外六入, 內外合故, 名為中道. 若依後文, 瓦石等物外六入所攝而為佛性. 如是相違云何會通? 通者解云. 若依有情無情異門, 瓦石等物, 不名佛性. 若就唯識所變現門, 內外無二, 合為佛性. *Yōlban chongyo* 涅槃宗要 (T 38, 253b5-14).
- 12 因有二種, 一法佛性, 二報佛性. 如來藏體是法佛性, 於此體上有可出生報佛之義, 名報佛性. *Niepan jing yiji* 涅槃經義記 roll 8 (T 37, 834c5-7).
- 13 法佛性者, 在性淨門. 報佛性者, 在隨染門. 如師子吼中言, 善男子! 我所宣說涅槃因者, 所謂佛性之性不生涅槃, 是故無因. 能破煩惱, 故名大果. 不從道生, 故名無果, 是故涅槃無因無果.

- 是文正顯法佛之性唯約隱顯，說爲因果也。迦葉品云，夫佛性者，不名一法，不名萬法。未得阿耨菩提之時，一切善不善無記法，盡名佛性。非佛性者，所謂一切牆壁瓦石無情之物。離如是等無情之物，是名佛性。 *Yōlban chongyo* 涅槃宗要 (T 38, 250a3-12).
- 14 問. 真如若是佛體，故名佛性，無情真如，亦是佛體。若佛因故，名佛性者，無情真如，亦是佛因。若以是性功德，故名佛性，無情真如，亦有性功德。因何有情名有佛性，無情不名有佛性邪？ *Yisheng foxing jiujing lun* 一乘佛性究竟論，X 55, 495a23-b02)
- 15 答. 若真俗翻覆相攝，即一法中，有一切法，如一切法中，有一法，如如無二故。若攝真從俗，即色如、非色如、眾生如、彌勒如、有情如、無情如不同。若攝俗從真，即色非色無異，情非情無異。若就如辦法，一切法中，有一切法如，故一切法中，有一切法，似因陀羅網。若以此言之，即情無情，皆名有佛性。 *Yisheng foxing jiujing lun* 一乘佛性究竟論 (X 55, 495b2-8).
- 16 真如是一，所望不同，得名有異。若望十方，諸佛報身名佛性，屬主釋也。法身名佛性，持業釋也。若望一切眾生名佛性，有財釋也，因取果名。故若望無情，非佛性也，無當果故。 *Yisheng foxing jiujing lun* 一乘佛性究竟論 (X 55, 495b10-14).
- 17 又爲斷見眾生，謂眾生之性，同於草木，盡在一期，無複後世。爲破此故，是故今明如來藏，必當作佛，不同草木，盡在一期。故涅槃云，佛性者，非如牆壁瓦石也。 *Shengman baoku* 勝鬘寶窟 roll 3 (T 37, 67a22-25).
- 18 法性者，明此真體普遍義。謂非直與前佛寶爲體，亦乃通與一切法爲性。即顯真如遍於染淨，通情非情，深廣之義。『論』云，在眾生數中，名爲佛性，在非眾生數中，名爲法性。 *Qixinlun yiji* 起信論義記 roll 1 (T 44, 247c10-14).
- 19 若三乘教，真如之性，通情非情，開覺佛性，唯局有情故。涅槃云，非佛性者謂草木等。若圓教中，佛性及性起，皆通依正，如下文辨。是故成佛具三世間，國土身等，皆是佛身。是故局唯佛果，通遍非情。 *Tanxuan ji* 探玄記 roll 16, (T 35, 405c27-406a1).
- 20 『論』云，在非情數中，名爲法性，在有情數中，名爲佛性。明知非情非有覺性。故應釋言，以性從緣，則情非情異，爲性亦殊，如涅槃等。泯緣從性，則非覺不覺。 *Huayan jing shu* 華嚴經疏 roll 30 (T 35, 726b28-c2).

Abbreviations

- T *Taishō Shinsbū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡邊海旭 *et al.*, 100 vols., Tokyo 1924~1934: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai.
- X *Xuzangjing* 續藏經 (Hong Kong reprint of *The Kyoto Supplement to the Canon* [*Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經]), 150 vols. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Buddhist Association, 1967.

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