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RETHINKING HUAYAN ETHICS: TATHĀGATAGARBHA, MORALITY IN HUAYAN
THOUGHT, AND ITS APPLICATION TO AI ETHICS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

During the Tang dynasty in China, the Huayan tradition experienced a significant revival, developing and advancing the philosophical characteristics of Tathāgatagarbha thought, thereby forming a major stream within Chinese Buddhism. This tradition continues to be a subject of academic and religious interest in East Asian countries today. Huayan Patriarchs from Dushun to Zongmi generally regarded the cultivation of wisdom and the practice of altruism as the twin pillars of the Huayan tradition. Despite the long history of accumulated discourses and their deep philosophical and religious significance, the practical and ethical aspect of the Huayan tradition seems to have attracted relatively less attention. This study begins by exploring why Huayan ethics and its philosophical characteristics have not received sufficient attention, aiming to elucidate a systematic structure of Huayan ethical theory through analyses from metaethical and normative ethical perspectives.

This study identifies three misconceptions that complicate an ethical approach to Huayan and the underlying Tathāgatagarbha thought: 1) A transcendentalist interpretation that regards the concepts of good and evil in the Chinese Mahāyāna tradition as merely relative dichotomies while emphasizing their transcendence. 2) Misunderstandings about the notion of True Self as the source of morality. 3) The conflation of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thoughts. Each of these misconceptions forms the subject of individual chapters of this study. Through philosophical clarification, this study reveals the unique ethical structure and characteristics of the Huayan tradition, distinct from Indian Buddhist traditions and other Mahāyāna schools. The delineated ethical structure of Huayan upholds the moral value of universal good and the foundation for

altruistic practice through the notion of Tathāgatarbha, establishes principles for resolving issues of personal identity and consistent practice through the concept of True Self, and finally, validates its philosophical uniqueness and lays the groundwork for applied ethics through the principle of dependent origination in the Dharma realm, that is, *Fajie yuanqi* (法界緣起).

The last section of this study explores how the ethical structure of Huayan can move beyond being a relic of the past to offer a useful theoretical framework for the burgeoning field of AI ethics, as part of an exploration into its applied ethical potential in contemporary philosophical discourses.

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

This dissertation aims to elucidate the unique ethical structure of the Huayan tradition by identifying and addressing three philosophical issues—the transcendentalist interpretation of good and evil as merely relative dichotomies, the diminished importance of the True Self as the source of morality, and the incorrect conflation of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thoughts—that have complicated an ethical approach to Huayan, and to explore its applied ethical potential, particularly in the context of AI ethics. Before delving into a thorough exploration of this topic, it is essential to understand the most fundamental contextual background that makes such an investigation possible. Therefore, this general introduction is structured in three parts. The first section, “The Position of the Chinese Huayan Tradition in East Asian Buddhist Studies and Its Philosophical Characteristics,” introduces the characteristics of the Huayan tradition, highlighting their strong emphasis on moral practice. The second section, “A Brief Examination of the Relatively Overlooked Ethical Theory of Huayan and Its Historical Background,” though not the main focus of this paper, presents existing research on the historical context that has led to the relatively insufficient attention to ethical approaches in the Huayan tradition. The final section, “Internal Issues: Three Philosophical Problems Impeding the Formation of Discourse on Huayan Ethics,” aims to provide an overview of the core issues addressed in each chapter of this dissertation.

1.1 The Position of the Chinese Huayan Tradition in East Asian Buddhist Studies and Its Philosophical Characteristics

What is Buddhism? This seemingly simple question is perhaps one of the most difficult puzzles that has never reached a unified answer throughout Buddhist history. The complexity of this question lies in the historical development of the Buddhist tradition, where differences in interpretations of Siddhartha Gautama's (c. 563-483 BCE) teachings, spread by various individuals and embraced by different cultures, led to the schisms of many subordinate traditions. These schisms began as early as the third century BCE and continue even into the present day.¹ Consequently, as Bernard Faure points out, many contemporary studies on Buddhism often describe it as "Buddhism is one and many," regardless of the particular tradition being focused on.²

In East Asia, most Buddhist traditions have evolved by concentrating on several foundational scriptures (所依經典).³ Similarly, it is undeniable that many contemporary studies on Buddhism, even those labeled under the broad category of 'Buddhism,' are often deeply rooted in the discourses of one or two specific traditions. In this context, it is sometimes considered unrealistic to view all Buddhist teachings within a single consistent framework, making localized perspectives in Buddhist studies almost inevitable. This is also true for studies on Huayan Buddhism. This research, while pursuing the truth of Buddhism, does so through the lens of the Chinese Huayan tradition. Even the teachings of other traditions that can be meaningfully utilized for this endeavor, such as Tathāgatagarbha thought, Yogācāra, Tiantai, and Chan

¹ Bernard Faure, *Unmasking Buddhism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 7-11.

² *Ibid.*, 7.

³ Thomas Cleary, *Entry Into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), vii.

traditions, are historically intertwined closely with the Chinese Huayan tradition.

The Huayan tradition, which this paper primarily discusses, flourished significantly in East Asian countries from the 7th century onwards, influencing the doctrinal systems of later East Asian Buddhist traditions. It continues to survive today, albeit as smaller sects.⁴ The foundational scripture for this tradition is the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (華嚴經), translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅, 359-429) in the early 5th century. However, its philosophical understanding largely relies on the treatises and commentaries of five Huayan patriarchs, from Dushun (杜順, 557-640) to Zongmi (宗密, 780-841).⁵ Common themes among these Huayan patriarchs include the Doctrinal Classification of the Buddha's Teachings (教相判釋) and the framework of the Ten Profound Gates (十玄門), which present the interdependent origination of the Dharma Realm. These themes have been extensively analyzed and critiqued in modern academic circles.

From an ethical perspective, the most prominent feature of the Huayan tradition is its emphasis on altruistic practices. While altruism, through concepts like the Four All-Embracing Virtues (四攝法, *catuḥ-saṃgraha-vastu*), was already considered part of the Buddha's teachings from the early stages and was more actively contemplated for the welfare of sentient beings with the rise of the Mahāyāna tradition, Huayan's approach to altruism was not merely an extension of

⁴ According to Thomas Cleary, the Buddhist persecution by Emperor Wuzong (武宗) of Tang in the 840s significantly weakened the influence of many Buddhist traditions, leaving only the Chan and Pure Land traditions with substantial vigor. While the Huayan school continued to exist, it did so not as a practice-oriented circle but rather as a doctrinal tradition sustained by Chan masters and others. See *Ibid.*, 16-17; In modern times, the Huayan school has resumed its role as a practice-oriented circle. For instance, in South Korea in 1966, Youngsuk Han (韓永錫) established the Korean Buddhist Hwaecom Order (大韓佛教華嚴宗), recognizing Wonhyo (元曉, 617-686) as its primary patriarch and the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* as its foundational scripture, thereby continuing the tradition.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

these older trends.⁶ Rather, it emerged as an attempt to systematically structure altruistic practices within a Buddhist context, countering the risk of overly cloistered pursuits of Buddhist truth as the original teachings (原音) of Śākyamuni faded post-parinirvāṇa. Consequently, the Huayan patriarchs did not merely emphasize the importance of altruism but also considered altruistic practice as one of the two essential pillars of Buddhist truth alongside ‘wisdom.’⁷ In other words, altruistic practice became regarded as an indispensable element for attaining enlightenment, on par with observation or meditation practices.

Among the many bodhisattvas often depicted as mythical figures in the Mahāyāna tradition, the emphasis on Samantabhadra (普賢菩薩) particularly illustrates the tendencies of the Huayan patriarchs. The name 'Samanta' means 'universal,' signifying that his virtue pervades the entire world, and it is translated into Chinese as 'pu (普).' 'Bhadra' means 'excellent' or 'virtuous,' and it is translated into Chinese as 'xian (賢).'⁸ As indicated by his name, Samantabhadra symbolizes the practice of virtue (行).⁹ The emphasis on Samantabhadra and the practice of virtue frequently appears in the writings of the Huayan patriarchs, to the extent that it is difficult

⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸ In interpreting the name of Samantabhadra, Chengguan explains that “*xian (賢)*” refers to true virtue, indicating that the virtue of the Dharma Realm corresponds to the truth of Samantabhadra. Furthermore, in his interpretation of “*pu (普)*,” he describes it as the unceasing practice of altruism to salvage innumerable sentient beings across infinite time and space. See “賢謂至順調善故又賢謂真善善契理故法界之善為普賢法故。若別說者略有十普一—所求普謂要求一切諸佛所證故。二所化普要化無盡眾生界故。三所斷普無邊煩惱一斷便能一切斷故。四事行普八萬度門無邊行海無不行故。五理行普隨所修行深入無際徹理原故。六無礙行普事理二行相交徹故。七融通行普隨一—行攝一切故。八所起大用普無有一用不周徧故。九所行處普上之八門徧帝網剎而修行故。十修行時普窮三際時念念圓融無竟期故。” Chengguan (澄觀), the *Huayan jing puxian xingyuan pin biexing shuchao* (華嚴經普賢行願品別行疏鈔), X.05.0229.0261c18-0263a21.

⁹ Jongho Lee, *장관의 화엄 삼성원융관 연구* [A Study on the Cheng guan’s view point of Huacum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 5.

to enumerate all the instances. However, the most systematic presentation of this concept as a practice method is likely found in Chengguan's (澄觀, 738-839) 'Observations on the Perfect Integration of the Three Holy Ones (三聖圓融觀).' This practice method, which will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this paper, adopts a structure where Vairocana Buddha (毘盧遮那佛), Mañjuśrī (文殊菩薩), and Samantabhadra each symbolize the moment of enlightenment and the two essential practices required to achieve that moment. Here, Chengguan likens altruistic practice to Samantabhadra, positing that the ultimate moment of enlightenment occurs when it harmoniously combines with the wisdom of Mañjuśrī. At this time, altruistic practice is both a natural result of the attainment of wisdom and a means to validate the truth obtained through wisdom.¹⁰ Thus, altruistic practice forms the foundation of Huayan moral theory, finally becoming systematized in a structured form. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that Huayan philosophy and its ethical implications are virtually inseparable. In other words, the comprehensive establishment of Huayan philosophy inherently involves the establishment of its corresponding Huayan ethics.

1.2 A Brief Examination of the Relatively Overlooked Ethical Theory of Huayan and Its Historical Background

Despite the unique ethical pursuit within religious life and the theoretical background of Huayan philosophy, contemporary research on Huayan has relatively neglected its ethical

¹⁰ Ibid., 148.

perspective.¹¹ Considering that Buddhism, as a popular religion, has generally developed in close conjunction with the history, culture, philosophy, and politics of the regions where it spread, it is undeniable that complex causes have contributed to this situation in Huayan research. These causes can be broadly categorized into historical and philosophical backgrounds. The primary aim of this paper is to examine the three 'philosophical backgrounds' that have led to the relative neglect of Huayan ethics. However, since such phenomena did not arise solely from ideological characteristics, it is important to briefly examine the historical contexts that led to these phenomena before discussing the main topics of this paper. This is essential to accurately understand the position of Huayan studies in contemporary Buddhist scholarship.¹² By briefly reviewing existing historical research on the understanding of Buddhism in China, Korea, and Japan during the modern period, I aim to understand how these factors have influenced current trends in Buddhist ethics research.

¹¹ Regarding the concept of 'modernity,' Jongwook Kim notes that the periodization of ancient-medieval-modern used in East Asian studies is, at times, a Western perspective centered on the Christian tradition. Therefore, applying this periodization to the history of East Asia can easily lead to errors. Addressing this difficulty, Jongwook Kim argues that if we divide periods based on significant historical novelties, it is at least possible to distinguish a modern period in East Asian countries, and I agree with this view. According to him, the novelty for East Asian countries involves a series of processes that include responses to Western imperialist invasions. Refer to Jongwook Kim, "동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity]," *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 92.

¹² The observation that the study and understanding of Siddhartha Gautama's teachings have been transformed by the environments in which they were adopted is not merely a description of past events. In particular, in East Asian countries where Buddhism has functioned as a core ideology shaping the state and society for over a thousand years, Buddhism has become deeply intertwined with various aspects of society, history, culture, and art, and continues to evolve as an important part of these areas. Therefore, even today, many scholars argue that Buddhism cannot exist in isolation from the society to which it belongs. Some of them even maintain that, in this context, the Buddhist tradition is essential for understanding the national ethos of East Asian countries. The contemporary understanding and attitudes towards Buddhism in East Asian countries are also influenced by the current temporal and spatial environments, which in some ways are connected to those of the modern period. Thus, understanding the role and perception of Buddhism during the modern period is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Buddhism. For discussions on the close relationship between Buddhism and society in East Asian countries, see: Donggyoon Kang, "현대 한국불교의 동향과 과제 [The Contemporary Trend of Korean Buddhism and its Problems]," *Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 1 (2007): 111; Kiwoon Lee, Kiryong Cho, and Kiyeeop Yoon, "불교 학보를 통해 본 한국불교연구의 동향 [The Trend of Korean Buddhist Research from the Perspective on the *Bulgyohakbo*]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 63 (2012): 38; Yongtae Kim, "역사학에서 본 한국불교사 연구 100년 [Korean Buddhism from the Perspective of Historical Studies]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 63 (2012): 197.

If we were to identify a single keyword that runs through the trends in Buddhist studies conducted in East Asian countries since the modern era, it would likely be "imperialism." The term "imperialism," as used here, encompasses not only the Western imperialism that began to exert a tangible influence on East Asian countries around the 19th century, but also the militarism that emerged in Japan and the nationalist responses of neighboring countries to these forces. In East Asian countries, the Buddhist tradition was instrumentalized as a means of nationalist response amid such political circumstances.¹³ In the case of China, nationalist interest in the Buddhist tradition was sparked by the Opium War (1840-1842), symbolized by "pax sinica vs. pax britannica."¹⁴ Shortly after the introduction of Western philosophies and religions into China, Chinese intellectuals, having felt the power of the West, began to search for the source of Western strength in their ideologies.¹⁵ This trend was no exception among intellectuals in the

¹³ According to Jongwook Kim, in the cases of Korea and China, the nationalism that was fostered was a form of resistant nationalism against the external force of empires, distinct from the Western nationalism which formed as a pursuit of liberation from the internal system of feudalism. Refer to: Jongwook Kim, "동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity]," *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 97.

¹⁴ Ibid., 98; In the history of Chinese Buddhism, the modern period is generally considered to span from the Opium War (1840) to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949). See Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, "중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011): 209; According to Yonjae Kim, there is no disagreement in viewing the Opium War as the starting point of modernity in China. However, there is debate on how to define the end of this period, depending on whether one considers events or ideologies as the criteria. The Xinhai Revolution, the May Fourth Movement, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 are frequently mentioned as the endpoints of Chinese modernity. Refer to Yonjae Kim, "중국 근대성의 담론에서 본 태허의 인간불교와 그 현생관 [Tae Huh's Human Buddhism and Its View of This Life from the Perspective of a Discourse of Chinese Modernity]," *동양철학* (東洋哲學) 28 (2007): 315.

¹⁵ Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, "중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011): 209; The various attitudes that the Chinese developed in response to Western thought and technology significantly influenced the trajectory of China's social development. Particularly prominent was the approach of preserving Chinese traditions while adopting Western ideas and technologies to strengthen the nation, a method referred to as "Chinese essence, Western application" (中體西用). Jongwook Kim argues that this approach is evident in the transformative processes of the Self-Strengthening Movement (洋務運動), the Wuxu Reform Movement (戊戌變法), and the May Fourth Movement. Refer to Jongwook Kim, "동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in

modern Chinese Buddhist community. The research by Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, which traces recent trends in modern Chinese Buddhist studies, summarizes the characteristics of modern Chinese Buddhism into three points: 1) Awareness and reflection of national Buddhism, 2) conflict and assimilation of Eastern and Western cultures, and 3) research and education in modern Buddhist studies.¹⁶ These three characteristics categorize the responses of the modern Chinese Buddhist community to the West. Although each of these characteristics is closely interconnected, the most representative feature of modern Chinese Buddhism is undoubtedly the emergence of national Buddhism.

In the context of the emergence and development of modern Chinese national Buddhism, a key figure that must be mentioned is Yang Wenhui (楊文會, 1837-1911). Often regarded as the father of modern Chinese Buddhism, he viewed the modern era as the greatest crisis for the Chinese nation and sought to overcome it through Buddhist studies and education.¹⁷ His contributions to Chinese Buddhism can be understood in two major aspects: First, through the publishing activities at the Jinling Institute for Engraving Sutras (金陵刻經處), which he established in 1866, he enabled the revival of modern Chinese Buddhist studies by restoring scriptures lost during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). Since the founding of the Jinling Institute for Engraving Sutras, more than 3,000 volumes of Buddhist scriptures were published there. Second, in 1907, he founded a modern Buddhist educational institution called the Qiyuan Jingshe (祇洹精舍), where he taught Buddhist scriptures, Sanskrit, and English. This institution

the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 98~99.

¹⁶ Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, “중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism],” *불교학보* (佛教學報) 57 (2011): 207.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

produced important Buddhist scholars such as Ouyang Jingwu and Taixu, who significantly influenced modern and contemporary Chinese Buddhism.¹⁸ Additionally, Yang Wenhui founded the Buddhist Studies Society (佛學研究會) and regularly lectured on scriptures.¹⁹ Yang Wenhui's activities had a profound impact not only on his direct disciples but also on late Qing reform thinkers such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Tan Sitong, thereby spreading nationalistic Buddhism.²⁰ As Liang Qichao noted, there was hardly anyone in the late Qing reformist thought

¹⁸ According to Youngsook Jeon, in addition to Yang Wenhui's Qiyuan Jingshe, modern educational institutions were established by several Buddhist temples in China at that time. This movement was also underpinned by the socio-political context of responding to Western imperialist incursions. Amid Western encroachments, the Republican government (1912-1949) became aware of the importance of modern education but recognized the financial difficulties in establishing appropriate educational institutions. Consequently, a movement called Miaoshan Xingxue (廟產興學) emerged, led by government officials, to utilize the properties owned by Buddhist temples for investment in Chinese education.

The late Qing period is known as a time when the highest number of temples existed in Chinese history. In some counties (縣), there were between 100 to 300 temples, and the property and land owned by these temples were substantial. The education-related laws that the government intended to enact included provisions requiring 70% of temple properties to be invested in modern education. In response, to protect temple properties and simultaneously achieve modern Buddhist education, the Chinese Buddhist community became actively involved in establishing Buddhist educational institutions. Jeon argues that, although Buddhists somewhat agreed on the importance of modern Buddhist education, the primary objective of the existing temples in response to the Miaoshan Xingxue movement was to protect temple properties. As a result, many institutions did not provide proper education. For more on the education investment movement of the early Republican Chinese government and the response of Chinese temples, refer to Youngsook Jeon, “중국불교는 어떻게 단련되었는가 (The Shaping of Chinese Buddhism),” *The Buddhist Review* (佛敎評論) 69 (2017), <http://www.budreview.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1790>; Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim present a different interpretation of the Miaoshan Xingxue movement and the development of modern Chinese Buddhism compared to Youngsook Jeon. According to them, the Miaoshan Xingxue movement advocated by figures such as Zhang Zhidong (張之洞) and Kang Youwei (康有為) was closer to exploitation by local gentry and warlords than to investment in education. In response to this exploitation, modern Buddhists united and established various organizations and institutions, thereby promoting the modernization of Chinese Buddhism. Cheong and Kim present as evidence the point that many of the Buddhist leaders in modern Taiwan and Hong Kong originated from the Buddhist organizations and institutions established in modern China. Refer to Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, “중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011): 218-219.

¹⁹ Jinmoo Kim categorizes the achievements of Yang Wenhui, who led the revival of modern Chinese Buddhist studies, into four aspects. This categorization considers the establishment of Qiyuan Jingshe and the Buddhist Studies Society as separate achievements and adds the establishment of the China Institute for Buddhist Studies (支那內學院) by Yang Wenhui's disciple, Ouyang Jingwu, as another significant accomplishment. Refer to Jinmoo Kim, “양문회의 불학사상과 금릉각경처 [Yang WenHui's Buddhism thought and Jinlingkejingchu],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 46 (2007): 161~162.

²⁰ Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, “중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011): 211.

circle who was not connected to Buddhism, and most of them had either learned from or been influenced by Yang Wenhui.²¹

Monastic scholars and lay Buddhist scholars (居士) who either participated in the establishment of these educational institutions or received education from them later became intellectuals who actively responded to Western thought, such as idealism, through Buddhist thought. These scholars utilized Yogācāra Buddhism and Chinese Tathāgatagarbha thought as weapons to counter Western spiritual culture and philosophy.²² The philosophical depth of Yogācāra, in particular, was considered comparable to Western philosophy, such as that of Kant, leading to a significant rise in epistemological studies centered on Yogācāra.²³ Additionally, there were attempts to find the origins of modern political concepts in Buddhism, such as Tan Sitong's argument that modern concepts of equality could be derived from Śākyamuni's opposition to the caste system.²⁴ All these efforts aimed to demonstrate that Chinese spiritual culture was not inferior to that of Western imperialism. In this regard, the understanding of Buddhism in modern China was both a means of elevating nationalistic spirit and a product of

²¹ Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 99.

²² Yogācāra Buddhism was utilized as a theoretical tool by figures such as Liang Qichao during the process of introducing Western philosophy, such as Kantian idealism, to China. For example, Liang Qichao equated Kant's concept of the transcendental self with the Buddhist concept of Suchness (真如, *tathatā*). See Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, “중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011): 215; Additionally, refer to the following studies: Jeran Kim, “중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006): 3; Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 100.

²³ Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 40-41.

²⁴ Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 101-102.

the clash between Eastern and Western cultures.²⁵ This tendency to understand Eastern and Western cultures antagonistically further led to the emergence of the discourse of defending the nation through Buddhism, which posited that Buddhism should protect the nation and the people.²⁶ Moreover, it sparked a tendency to call for active participation of the Buddhist community in social development.²⁷ According to Daoru Wei, this call for active involvement in social development continues to influence contemporary Buddhist studies in China.²⁸

As examined above, while the revival of Buddhist studies in modern China did indeed deepen the doctrinal aspects of the existing Chinese Mahayana tradition, the underlying purpose of such activities was fundamentally to respond to Western thought. It is true that research on Buddhist epistemology centered on Yogācāra deepened during this process; however, such philosophical inquiry did not seem to extend to other major Chinese Buddhist traditions like Tathāgatagarbha thought or Huayan thought. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this study, Tathāgatagarbha thought, in fact, faced rejection due to issues concerning its authenticity. Similarly, traditions based on Tathāgatagarbha thought, such as Huayan and Chan, received similar treatment. In this respect, research on Huayan doctrine was still not a primary concern in the trends of Buddhist studies in modern China. Furthermore, attempts to expand the scope of

²⁵ Jeran Kim, “중국의 근대화와 불교 [The Modernization of China and Chinese Buddhism],” *The Buddhist Review* (佛敎評論) 22 (2005).

²⁶ Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, “중국근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011): 212.

²⁷ Yonjae Kim, “중국 근대성의 담론에서 본 태허의 인간불교와 그 현생관 [Tae Huh’s Human Buddhism and Its View of This Life from the Perspective of a Discourse of Chinese Modernity],” *동양철학* (東洋哲學) 28 (2007): 314; Jeran Kim, “중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006): 19.

²⁸ Daoru Wei, “當代中國佛敎的現狀與使命 [The Status Quo and Mission of Chinese Buddhism],” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 1 (2007): 39.

Huayan teachings to other fields of study, such as ethics, were even further removed from the mainstream.

In the case of Korea, the establishment of methodologies for modern Buddhist studies is considered to have begun in the 20th century.²⁹ This development, much like in China, is deeply related to imperialism, particularly Japanese militarism. After the Treaty of Ganghwa in 1876, multiple attempts at enlightenment and self-strengthening movements failed, and Korea became a colony of Japan in 1910. The Japanese Governor-General of Korea implemented surveys of Korean religion, culture, history, and artifacts as a means for colonial rule. Notably, the Japanese used Buddhism as an ideological tool for domination, implementing "The Law of Korean Buddhist Temples" just one year after the annexation to efficiently control the Korean people.³⁰

During these surveys, some Japanese scholars, such as Tōru Takahashi (高橋 亨, 1876-1967) and Kaiten Nukariya (忽滑谷 快天, 1867-1934), viewed Korean Buddhism as a mere derivative of Chinese Buddhism and devalued its historical and ideological significance based on a colonial perspective.³¹ Against this historical backdrop, it was only natural for Korean Buddhist scholars to become committed to discovering the unique value of Korean Buddhism.³²

²⁹ Yongtae Kim, “역사학에서 본 한구불교사 연구 100년 [Korean Buddhism from the Perspective of Historical Studies],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 63 (2012): 197.

³⁰ Ven. Seongwon, “Either Peacemakers or Anti-peacemakers: Imperialisms and Modern Korean Buddhism,” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 2 (2008): 368-384.

³¹ Yongtae Kim, “역사학에서 본 한구불교사 연구 100년 [Korean Buddhism from the Perspective of Historical Studies],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 63 (2012): 199-200.

³² The responses of Koreans to Japanese imperialism were diverse, and it would be an oversimplification to describe them all as having a single characteristic. Ven. Seongwon categorizes the reactions of the Korean Buddhist community to Japanese imperialism after the annexation of Korea into four groups: 1) Peacemakers who resisted the Japanese Empire and Japanese Buddhism while supporting the reform of Korean Buddhism; 2) Anti-peacemakers who cooperated with the Japanese Empire and Japanese Buddhism either for personal gain or under coercion; 3) Opportunists who secretly supported the independence movement while officially cooperating with the Japanese Empire and Japanese Buddhism; and 4) Religious practitioners who were not interested in the Japanese Empire or in

For example, Namseon Choe (1890-1957), a prominent scholar of modern Korea, perceived Korean history and the Korean people's spirit as inseparable from Buddhism. Building on this perception, he worked tirelessly to reinterpret the Korean Buddhist tradition as a means of fostering national consciousness and demonstrating its unique value.³³

Japanese Buddhism, which entered Korea alongside the Japanese military, left a lasting impact. Particularly, characteristics of Japanese Buddhism, such as married clergy and meat consumption, were adopted by some Korean monks. These customs caused sharp conflicts and divisions within the Korean Buddhist community for decades after liberation, and such discord has not been completely resolved even into the 21st century.³⁴ For the reasons outlined above, post-liberation Korean Buddhist studies have continually focused on identifying the identity of Korean Buddhism. It was not until the 1980s that the scope of research began to expand into

political and social issues in Korea, but were solely dedicated to preserving the Korean Buddhist tradition. Refer to Ven. Seongwon, "Either Peacemakers or Anti-peacemakers: Imperialisms and Modern Korean Buddhism," *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 2 (2008): 358-373; However, after liberation, these various groups within the Korean Buddhist community underwent further changes. The Buddhists from the four groups identified by Ven. Seongwon, along with their successors, each responded to the post-Japanese colonial period in their own ways. Nonetheless, the mainstream current of Korean Buddhism that continues to this day has been led by the fourth group, the religious practitioners. This group, through efforts such as the purification Buddhist movement from 1954 to 1962, worked to remove the remnants of Japanese Buddhism and restore the traditional characteristics of Korean Buddhism. Refer to Ibid., 388-390.

³³ Yongtae Kim, "역사학에서 본 한구불교사 연구 100년 [Korean Buddhism from the Perspective of Historical Studies]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 63 (2012): 200.

³⁴ Nam-Lin Hur, "The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 129; The sharp conflicts that occurred between some sects within the Korean Buddhist community after liberation might have been influenced by the sectarian tendencies of Japanese Buddhism. According to Gyootak Shin, Japan began to develop a systematic sectarian structure to manage monks and temples as early as the Nara period (年分度者, Japanese: *nenbundosha*). This contrasts with the trends in China and Korea, where Buddhism was protected by governmental authority and expanded its influence. Thus, in Japan, the understanding of sects tends to refer to temple-centered organizations, whereas in China and Korea, it pertains more to scholarly classifications based on doctrinal interpretations. Gyootak Shin argues that this sectarian structure of Japanese Buddhism significantly influenced Korean Buddhism during the Japanese colonial period, and this influence persisted in shaping the composition and research direction of Korean Buddhist sects after liberation. See, Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 51-57.

areas such as philosophy, linguistics, and art, and to lay the foundation for such studies.³⁵ This trend in post-modern Korean Buddhist studies is also evident through quantitative indicators. For example, according to an analysis of the *Journal of Buddhist Studies* (佛教學報), the first prestigious academic journal of its kind in Korea, published in 1962, out of the 729 Buddhist-related papers published between 1963 and 2011, approximately 310, or 40%, focused on Korean Buddhism.³⁶ Additionally, research on the application of Buddhism in fields such as society, art, and science began to increase in the 1970s.³⁷ This statistical information implicitly suggests that both the purpose of the journal and the scholars dedicated to Buddhist studies viewed establishing the identity of Korean Buddhism within the context of Korea's culture, history, and society as a significant task of their time.³⁸ Given this trend in post-modern Korean Buddhist studies, it is reasonable to infer that doctrinal studies and applied fields such as Buddhist ethics were relatively neglected.³⁹

In the case of Japanese Buddhist studies since the modern era, there has been a relative abundance of doctrinal research, which has contributed to shaping the distinctive characteristics of contemporary Japanese Buddhism. However, it can be said that the doctrinal issues primarily

³⁵ Yongtae Kim, “역사학에서 본 한국불교사 연구 100년 [Korean Buddhism from the Perspective of Historical Studies],” *불교학보* (佛教學報) 63 (2012): 201; Kim Yongtae argues that the perception of Buddhism as a form of *national spiritual culture*, which was shaped in the early to mid-20th century, has now become common knowledge in Korea, going beyond the realm of mere academic analysis. See *Ibid.*, 208-211.

³⁶ Kiwoon Lee, Kiryong Cho, and Kiyeop Yoon, “불교학보를 통해 본 한국불교연구의 동향 [The Trend of Korean Buddhist Research from the Perspective on the *Bulgyohakbo*],” *불교학보* (佛教學報) 63 (2012): 17-36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-37.

³⁹ Regarding the relative neglect of doctrinal studies in Korean Buddhist scholarship since the modern era, some scholars attribute this to the pursuit of enlightenment solely from the Seon (禪) perspective, which has continued since the Joseon Dynasty. Refer to Donggyoon Kang, “현대 한국불교의 동향과 과제 [The Contemporary Trend of Korean Buddhism and it's Problems],” *Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 1 (2007): 105.

addressed in Japanese Buddhism are also closely related to the international political dynamics of modern East Asia. In this context, approaches based on ethical perspectives also appear to be relatively lacking compared to research in other subfields of Buddhism in modern Japanese Buddhist studies.

As is widely recognized, Japan, influenced by Western imperialism, concentrated its nationalistic power around the state and further developed its own form of military imperialism. In contrast to the characteristics of modern China and Korea, which were shaped by their responses to invasions by Western and Japanese imperialism, Japan's modernization was marked by its imperialistic expansion into neighboring countries.⁴⁰ The trajectory of modern Japanese Buddhism was also partially related to Japan's ruling system and international relations.

The Meiji government, which led Japan's modernization through national reforms, issued a series of proclamations aimed at strengthening nationalism in the same year the government was established (1868). These included the separation of Shinto and Buddhism (神仏分離, Japanese: *shinbutsu bunri*). The religion they sought to align with the state was Japan's traditional Shintō (神道). The first task for this purpose was to distinguish the pure characteristics of Shintō by removing Buddhist elements that had formed through the long-standing syncretic tradition of Shinto and Buddhism. During the implementation of these policies, Shinto adherents, under the protection of the Meiji government, occasionally engaged in violent acts such as destroying Buddhist temples and statues. This domestic situation at the time was sufficient to instill a sense of crisis among many Buddhists. Japanese Buddhists sought to overcome this

⁴⁰ Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 103.

crisis by demonstrating greater loyalty to the Meiji government, leading to the development of Japanese Buddhism as a form of ‘state-protecting Buddhism (護国仏教, Japanese: *gokoku bukkyō*).’⁴¹

The goals of Japanese Buddhism as state-protecting Buddhism can be summarized in two main objectives: one was to block the infiltration of Christianity, a potential competitor, into Japan and other East Asian countries; the other was to simultaneously expand the influence of Japanese Buddhism into neighboring countries.⁴² This aligned with the Japanese military regime's desire to rally national consciousness and encourage the spiritual submission of the people in the surrounding subjugated nations.⁴³ Consequently, Japanese Buddhism actively accompanied Japan's imperialistic movements.⁴⁴ The expansion of Japanese Buddhist sects into

⁴¹ The above analysis of the transformation of Japanese Buddhism into state-protecting Buddhism references the following studies: Ibid., 104; Yongsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 13~15.

⁴² According to Seungmee Cho, the role aimed at by modern Japanese Buddhism was very similar to that undertaken by missionaries during the expansion of Western imperialism. See Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 281; However, the overseas missionary activities of Japanese monks were largely directed towards Japanese expatriates, including soldiers and civilians, and were not very successful in converting the local population. See Ibid., 286; Nam-Lin Hur, “The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 109.

⁴³ Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 289; Furthermore, during the war, military monks (從軍僧侶, Japanese: *jūgun sōryō*) played roles in comforting Japanese soldiers and conducting funeral ceremonies for the war dead, and sometimes even provided financial support to the military. See Nam-Lin Hur, “The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 108-115; For details on the activities of Japanese military monks from the First Sino-Japanese War to the Asia-Pacific War, see Keiichi Harada, “일본에서의 전쟁과 종교 [War and Religion in Japan],” trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 118-125.

⁴⁴ Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 105; The spread of Japanese Buddhism overseas primarily targeted China and Korea. The first foray was by Kōchō Ogurusu (小栗栖 香頂, 1830–1905) of the Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗), who established a branch temple in Shanghai in 1876 for missionary work in China. Working in Nagasaki, a port city open to foreign trade, he witnessed the activities of Christian missionaries early on.

other Asian countries became more pronounced after Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and the establishment of missionary outposts in these countries became a fundamental strategy.⁴⁵

The research on Buddhist doctrines conducted by Japanese monks and laypeople during the modern era also aligned with the political direction of the time. For example, Junjirō Takakusu (高楠 順次郎, 1866-1945), a prominent scholar of modern Japanese Buddhism and editor of the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (大正新脩大藏經), reinterpreted Huayan concepts such as ‘one is all, all is one (一即一切多即一)’⁴⁶ and ‘perfect harmony and unobstructed interpenetration (圓融無礙)’ to fit the relationship between the state and its citizens, thereby adapting Huayan studies to the taste of Japanese imperialism.⁴⁷ Additionally, monks from the Japanese Zen

The abolition of the Kōsatsu system, which symbolized the prohibition of Christianity in Japan, prompted him to envision a pan-Asian Buddhist alliance known as the "Three Nations Buddhist Alliance" (Japan, China, and India). See Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 282-287; The first Japanese temple in Korea was established in Busan in 1877 by the Higashi Hongan-ji branch of Jōdo Shinshū. See Nam-Lin Hur, “The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 107.

⁴⁵ Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 290-292; According to Seungmee Cho, Japanese Buddhism was actively expanding overseas, with over 500 Jōdo Shinshū Nishi Hongan-ji (西本願寺) branch missionary outposts established globally, including in North America. However, their missionary activities were completely withdrawn following Japan's defeat in 1945.

⁴⁶ Unlike Takakusu, who reinterpreted the Huayan concept of ‘one is all, all is one’ to suit the tastes of the Japanese Empire, Yongun Han (1879-1944), a Korean monk and resistance activist of the same period, interpreted it as representing an equal harmony between individual uniqueness and universality. Han used this interpretation as the ideological basis for the resistance movement against imperialism, which disrupted the harmony between equal individualities. This serves as an example of how the same Buddhist concept was interpreted differently depending on the political situations influenced by imperialism. See Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006): 108~110.

⁴⁷ Ishii Kosei, “화엄철학은 어떻게 일본의 정치이데올로기가 되었는가 (How Huayan Philosophy Became Japan's Political Ideology),” trans. Yeonsik Choi, *The Buddhist Review* (佛敎評論) 6 (2001): 306; Similarly, Kokuryu Ishida (石田 黒龍), in an article for the magazine *Daijōzen* (大乘禪), emphasized that the common character in Zen (禪) and

tradition, including the Sōtō school, provided interpretations of traditional Buddhist concepts like compassion and emptiness that were modified to align with militarism. Kando Nakane (中根 環堂, 1876-1959), who later became the president of Komazawa University, was a representative figure of this movement.⁴⁸ Monks from the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji sect, such as Ryōon Fujishima (藤島 了穩, 1852-1918), claimed that those with deep faith would be reborn in the Pure Land even if they died on the battlefield, presenting Pure Land teachings in a way that suited the military's preferences.⁴⁹ D.T. Suzuki (鈴木 大拙, 1870-1966), a significant figure introduced in the second chapter of this study, supported the First Sino-Japanese War as a holy war in his essay *Shin shūkyōron* (新宗教論).⁵⁰ Although there were a few voices criticizing the imperial expansion, the majority of Buddhists in Japan continued to support it.⁵¹ According to Nam-lin Hur, in 1939,

war (戰) is 'one' (單), meaning that everyone must unite with one mind to lead the Greater East Asia War to victory. See, Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 30.

⁴⁸ Nam-Lin Hur, "The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 112-122.

⁴⁹ Eiichi Otani, "전쟁은 죄악인가?: 20세기 초 일본불교에서의 반전론 [Is War a Sin?: Pacifism of Japanese Buddhism in Early 20th Century]," trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 186.

⁵⁰ Suzuki argued that the Qing dynasty was obstructing Japan's commercial activities and thereby hindering the progress of humanity. He emphasized that in order to counter this, compassion should be set aside and people should be made to submit in the name of religion, which he described as a religious act. For quotations and evaluations of Suzuki's remarks in *Shin shūkyōron*, as well as other statements and actions by monks who allied with imperialist forces, refer to Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 27-30.

⁵¹ Nam-Lin Hur, "The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 115; Representative figures of the anti-war movement among Japanese monks were Shōgen Takenaka (1867–1945) and Kenmyō Takagi (1864–1914) of the Ōtani branch of Jōdo Shinshū. Takenaka advocated for anti-war sentiments during the First Sino-Japanese War, resulting in his imprisonment. His charges were only rescinded in 2007, restoring his honor. Takagi, on the other hand, was imprisoned in 1910 for his involvement in an assassination attempt on Emperor Meiji and committed suicide in prison in 1914. Eiichi Otani emphasizes that the number of Buddhist figures advocating for anti-war positions was smaller compared to those from other religions, such as Christianity. The anti-war discourse in Japan was initially raised by Christian and socialist groups, and the anti-war stance of Japanese Buddhism was significantly influenced by these movements. See Eiichi Otani, "전쟁은 죄악인가?: 20세기 초 일본불교에서의 반전론 [Is War a Sin?: Pacifism of Japanese Buddhism in Early 20th

as Japan's imperial aggression intensified, the Religious Organizations Law, which the Japanese military had been carefully crafting since 1899, was enacted. This law caused Japanese Buddhism, along with all other religions in Japan, to lose most of their original religious functions and become tools for imperial conquest.⁵² For instance, Japanese Buddhism began to ideologically oppose socialism, which was associated with their enemy, the Soviet Union, and started to criticize prominent figures like Taixu, who condemned Japanese imperialism. Sometimes, these public statements were organized by the military rather than the individuals themselves.⁵³

Many of the topics that form the mainstream of research in Japanese Buddhist studies from the modern era to the present day are closely related to the development of Japanese Buddhism during the modern period.⁵⁴ One aspect of this is the study of Buddhist history and culture. Scholars such as Kyuichi Yoshida (吉田 久一, 1915–2005), who was active mainly after Japan's defeat in World War II, have written from a reflective perspective on the politicization of Japanese Buddhism during the wartime period. This perspective has become a mainstream topic and continues to be of significant interest in contemporary Japanese Buddhist studies.⁵⁵ Based on

Century],” trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 175–193.

⁵² Nam-Lin Hur, “The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 117.

⁵³ Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 296–297.

⁵⁴ It should be acknowledged that many of the topics of interest in contemporary Japanese Buddhism have roots that trace back to the pre-modern era. For example, the topics related to death and funerals still hold significant doctrinal and ritual importance in contemporary Japanese Buddhism. This tradition dates back to the Edo period (1603–1867), when Buddhism was granted exclusive authority over funerals by the shogunate, making it a long-standing theme. See Fumihiko Sueki, “現代日本仏教の動向と課題 (Trends and Challenges in Modern Japanese Buddhism),” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* Special Volume (2007): 67.

⁵⁵ Yongsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 22–33; According to Sueki, during this period, separate from the

this viewpoint, scholars like Masaharu Hishiki (菱木 政晴), Satoshi Daito (大東 仁), and Shoko Ichinohe (一戸 彰晃) have also extensively dealt with the issue of Japanese Buddhism's war responsibility.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, researchers like Mitsugi Komoto (孝本 貢) and Taijo Tamamuro (圭室 諦成) have analyzed the impact of the 'Abolish Buddhism and Destroy Buddha' (廃仏毀釈, Japanese: *Haibutsu kishaku*) movement—an anti-Buddhist movement carried out by the Meiji government and Shintō adherents—on the formation and activities of the Japanese Buddhist community.⁵⁷

Another aspect of Japanese Buddhist research trends formed after the modern era is based on Western research methodologies imported into Japan. During the Meiji period, the study of Indian philology, which was popular in the West, was introduced to Japan. This coincided with the establishment of modern educational institutions by Buddhist organizations, leading to a trend of philological Buddhist studies.⁵⁸ This philological research trend was primarily initiated and led by scholars at Tokyo Imperial University. Key figures such as Tetsujirō Inoue (井上 哲次郎, 1856-1944), Masaharu Anesaki (姉崎 正治, 1873-1949), and Junjirō Takakusu had studied in Europe.⁵⁹ Through their efforts, positivist critiques of Chinese Buddhist

issue of military imperialism in modern Japan, historical research was also conducted on the activities of Japanese masters such as Hōnen, Shinran, and Dōgen, commonly referred to as Kamakura New Buddhism (鎌倉新仏教). These studies achieved considerable results. See Fumihiko Sueki, “現代日本仏教の動向と課題 (Trends and Challenges in Modern Japanese Buddhism),” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* Special Volume (2007): 82.

⁵⁶ Yongsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁸ Fumihiko Sueki, “現代日本仏教の動向と課題 (Trends and Challenges in Modern Japanese Buddhism),” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* Special Volume (2007): 76.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

texts like the *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論) and approaches to Indian original texts through Sanskrit were carried out.⁶⁰ Furthermore, based on this philological methodology, comprehensive Buddhist collections and dictionaries such as the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* and the *Great Japanese Supplementary Tripiṭaka* (大日本續藏經) were compiled during the Shōwa period (昭和, 1926–1989). This philological methodology, focused on Indian Buddhism, has since become a characteristic of Japanese Buddhist studies and has been exported back to the United States and other Asian countries, exerting significant influence.⁶¹

As with Korea and China, the trends in modern Japanese Buddhist research were greatly influenced by the Buddhist culture formed during the world wars. Consequently, there has been a strong emphasis on methodologies like historiography and philology. As Fumihiko Sueki points out, research on Buddhist thought in contemporary Japan is relatively lacking.⁶² In this context,

⁶⁰ Based on a philological perspective, the formal presentation of the ‘Mahāyāna Buddhism is not the Buddha’s teaching’ theory (大乘非佛說論) in Japan’s modern academic circles was made by Senshō Murakami (村上 專精, 1851~1928), the first professor of Buddhist studies at Tokyo University. He was also a monk of the Jōdo Shinshū sect, and his theory sparked significant resistance within the traditional Japanese Buddhist community, leading him to return his clerical status to the Jōdo Shinshū. According to Sueki, after the introduction of Murakami’s theory, Japanese Buddhist studies became more focused on Indian philology, which in turn led to a neglect of the study of Japanese Buddhist thought. See *Ibid.*, 77-79; also see Yongsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 17~20.

⁶¹ Yongsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 16; The Indian-centered trend in philological research eventually led to the emergence of Critical Buddhism (批判仏教) in the 1980s. Proposed by scholars affiliated with Komazawa University, such as Noriaki Hakamaya (袴谷 憲昭) and Shirō Matsumoto (松本 史朗), Critical Buddhism regards the concepts of dependent origination (緣起) and emptiness (空) as the only true teachings of Buddhism. They rejected the tathāgatagarbha (如來藏) or Buddha-nature (仏性) and original enlightenment (本覺) ideas that had been accepted in East Asian countries. Their assertions, characterized by intense criticism of traditional doctrines, lacked persuasive arguments and were largely rejected by the Japanese Buddhist community. However, these ideas received more attention in places like the United States and China, where the discussions have continued into more recent times. See Fumihiko Sueki, “現代日本仏教の動向と課題 (Trends and Challenges in Modern Japanese Buddhism),” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture Special Volume* (2007): 79-80.

⁶² Fumihiko Sueki, “現代日本仏教の動向と課題 (Trends and Challenges in Modern Japanese Buddhism),” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture Special Volume* (2007): 82.

studies on Buddhist ethics, including Huayan ethics, are also likely to be similarly scarce.

In summary, this review has examined the historical background of Buddhist studies in the three East Asian countries where diverse discourses on Buddhism have been presented.⁶³ Although the studies introduced above deal with historical contexts from a century ago, they sufficiently demonstrate the historical trends that have led to the relative neglect of philosophical analysis of doctrines, particularly ethical approaches, in contemporary Buddhist studies. As

⁶³ In contemporary Buddhist studies, discourses on Buddhism are simultaneously presented and discussed across various regions of the world. While it is undoubtedly important and valuable to trace the historical backgrounds of research trends in all these regions, such an extensive examination exceeds the scope of this general introduction. Future research may need to address this broader scope. However, in this footnote, I will briefly introduce Jaeryong Shim's analysis of trends in Buddhist studies in the West since the modern era, to indirectly demonstrate that Huayan philosophy and Huayan ethics have been relatively overlooked in Western scholarship as well.

According to Jaeryong Shim, the history of Western studies on Buddhism can be divided into two major periods, with 1826 as the dividing line. The year 1826 marks the publication of *Essai sur le Pali*, a Pali grammar written by Eugene Burnouf (1801–1852) and Christian Lassen (1800–1876), which enabled in-depth doctrinal studies of Buddhist texts by Western scholars. Shim further subdivides the history of Western Buddhist studies from 1826 to the late 20th century into three periods: 1) The initial period led by Burnouf until 1877, during which essential linguistic tools and dictionaries for studying Indian Buddhist texts were researched and published. Burnouf studied not only Pali but also Sanskrit, and compiled dictionaries for languages such as Bengali, Marathi, and Gujarati. His research laid the cornerstone for the development of Western Buddhist studies. During this period, the first Pali dictionary, *A Dictionary of the Pali Language*, was published by Robert Caesar Childers in 1875. 2) The intermediate period until 1942 saw the activities of many scholars such as Sylvain Lévi (1863–1935), Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1866–1942), Hermann Oldenberg (1863–1934), Max Müller (1823–1900), and Rhys Davids (1843–1922), who primarily collected, published, and translated Indian Buddhist texts. Notable texts such as the complete Nikāyas, the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the *Longer Sukhāvāṭṭyūha Sūtra* and *Shorter Sukhāvāṭṭyūha Sūtra*, and the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* were translated during this period. While many research focused on textual publication, translation, and historical approaches to Buddhism and Śākyamuni, some scholars like Poussin dedicated significant efforts to the doctrinal and philosophical studies of Mahāyāna Buddhism, particularly investigating concepts of nirvāṇa in Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. 3) The modern period from 1943 onwards continued to expand the linguistic, textual, and doctrinal research of Indian Buddhism, building on previous achievements. This period witnessed increased scholarly attention on the three major traditions of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism with significant contributions by scholars such as Edward Conze (1904–1979), Étienne Lamotte (1903–1983), Jikido Takasaki (1926–2013), and David Seyfort Ruegg (1931–2021).

Given that forty years have passed since Shim's periodization, his classifications for the intermediate and later periods might need further refinement. However, these periods illustrate that modern Western Buddhist studies fundamentally began and developed as part of area studies focusing on India, with an emphasis on linguistics and cultural studies. Despite the growing interest in Mahāyāna Buddhism since the 20th century, as Shim notes, comprehensive studies on the languages and doctrines of East Asian Buddhism have only recently commenced in earnest. Consequently, the quantity of research on East Asian Buddhism remain considerably lower than those on Indian Buddhism. In this context, it is also evident that studies on East Asian Buddhist ethics, which go beyond doctrinal understanding to practical applications, have received relatively less attention. For further discussion, refer to: Jaeryong Shim, “서구에서의 불교연구 역사 [A Shortened History of Western Buddhist Studies],” *Asian Studies* (東亞文化) 18 (1981): 216-224; for another perspective on Buddhist studies in Western academia, see J. W. de Jong, *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America* (Bharat-Bharati, 1974), 49-82.

Gyootak Shin pointed out, Buddhist studies cannot be fully understood when researched independently while excluding the historical and ideological elements related to specific times and places.⁶⁴ In this context, although this study focuses on analyzing philosophical issues, I also introduced another possible cause of the situations addressed in this dissertation by examining the historical background. The insufficient research on Buddhist doctrines and their ethical applications since the modern era was not due to the specific intentions or mere preferences of scholars at that time. Rather, it was because they faced urgent contemporary issues, and the research trends of the time emerged as they earnestly sought to resolve those issues. The current environment of Buddhist studies has been shaped by the flow of such historical developments, and addressing the present problems or shortcomings is the role of today's scholars.

The next section will briefly introduce the preliminary research on the philosophical backgrounds that have contributed to the decline in interest in Huayan ethics within the Buddhist community, as discussed in each chapter of this paper.

1.3 Internal Issues: Three Philosophical Problems Impeding the Formation of Discourse on Huayan Ethics

This section provides a brief introduction to the main topics of this research and the methodologies used to approach them. In the field of contemporary Buddhist studies, three philosophical issues have been identified as hindrances to the interest in and approach to Huayan

⁶⁴ Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 54-55.

ethics. Each of these topics forms the central theme of the three chapters of this dissertation. The examination of these three philosophical backgrounds aims not only to present consistent answers to various controversial issues related to Huayan teachings and ethics but also to provide a comprehensive consideration of the ethical theoretical framework that can be derived from Huayan teachings. These three backgrounds can be briefly summarized as follows: 1) The transcendental perspective on the interpretation of the concepts of good and evil in Buddhism, 2) the differentiation of the notion self and the emergence of True Self concept in the historical development of the Buddhist tradition, and 3) the misconception of equating the doctrines of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan as having identical doctrinal characteristics. Each of these topics will be discussed in detail in the respective chapters of the main text. Here, the focus is on introducing the relevant prior research related to each topic, highlighting how this study is situated within the continuum of existing research, and what distinguishes it from previous studies.

1.3.1 Overview: Chapter 2

The second chapter, "Is Huayan Ethics Really Possible?: Transcendentalism and the Dichotomy of Good and Evil in Mahāyāna Soteriology," analyzes the impact of the 'transcendental perspective' on nirvāṇa and morality, predominantly presented by modern scholars, including those from Zen Buddhism, such as D.T. Suzuki, on the establishment of Buddhist ethics. It critiques this transcendental interpretation based on the concepts of good and evil as presented in Tathāgatagarbha thought and the Huayan tradition. Although the transcendental perspective introduced here is mainly associated with Zen discourse, it is placed

as the second chapter of this study because it has broadly influenced research across all Mahāyāna traditions, including Huayan. More importantly, it reveals an aspect that is fundamentally incompatible with Buddhist ethics. Therefore, it can be considered an unavoidable issue for the establishment of Huayan ethics.

The moral transcendentalist perspective articulated by Suzuki, which is utilized in this chapter, is clear. Good and evil are subjects confined to the human world, existing only through their relative relationships.⁶⁵ Therefore, morality and moral discipline, in themselves, can never be considered *sufficient* elements for achieving nirvāṇa, the state of transcendence from the secular world. In other words, "moral discipline as such will never lead us to the realization of the Self which is the absolute subjectum of our being."⁶⁶ This perspective diminishes the importance of Buddhist views on good and evil and the corresponding practices, ultimately excluding their role in the path to nirvāṇa. Consequently, this transcendentalist approach has been criticized by several contemporary scholars who advocate for the necessity of Buddhist ethics.

For example, Oksun An argues that the transcendentalist viewpoint misunderstands the emptiness of good and evil because Buddhist literature clearly provides various standards for moral evaluation, which presuppose the difference between good and evil.⁶⁷ Criticizing Buddhist

⁶⁵ See Daisetz T. Suzuki, "The Shin Sect of Buddhism," in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 80–81. Also refer to Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Infinite Light," in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 234.

⁶⁶ Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Infinite Light," in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 232–233.

⁶⁷ Oksun An, "불교윤리와 현대윤리학의 만남 [Understanding Buddhist Ethics in Terms of Contemporary Ethics]," *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 12 (2005): 4–5; Oksun An, "불교의 '선악불이 (善惡不二)'에 대한 이해" [An Understanding of "Non-duality of Good and Evil" of Buddhism], *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 14 (2006): 248–251.

transcendentalism, Sungtaek Cho points out that notions such as non-self (無我, *anattā*) and dependent origination (緣起) in the Mahāyāna context are intended not merely for an epistemological shift but for certain ethical practices, as the original spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism is to overcome self-centeredness and practice altruism.⁶⁸ Another severe criticism views Buddhist transcendentalism as falling into ‘wrongly-grasped emptiness (惡取空, *durgṛhītā śūnyatā*),’ leading practitioners to mistakenly believe that it is acceptable to ignore morality and altruistic practices.⁶⁹

However, existing criticisms of the transcendentalist approach have not addressed its core element, the 'relativistic view of good and evil.' Consequently, despite the various criticisms raised against it, the transcendentalist approach appears to maintain its logical consistency. Therefore, the second chapter of this study will present a meta-ethical analysis of the concepts of good and evil as found in traditions based on Tathāgatagarbha thought within the Mahāyāna tradition. This analysis will demonstrate that good and evil do not exist solely in a relative relationship but rather that the concepts of good and morality are essential prerequisites for the practice of rational conduct and the attainment of nirvāṇa.

The discussion in the second chapter will be structured as follows: First, the section “An Intricate Obstacle: Contemporary Buddhist Transcendentalism” will analyze the theoretical characteristics and implications of the transcendental perspective as revealed through Suzuki's writings. The next section, “Another Perspective on Buddhist Transcendentalism: Analyzing

⁶⁸ Sungtaek Cho, “불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 261.

⁶⁹ Jigyeon Kim, “악에 대한 불교적 이해 [The Buddhist Understanding of Evil],” in *악이란무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 쉼, 1992): 150.

Good and Evil within the Mahāyāna Framework,” will categorize and analyze the concepts of good and evil found within the Mahāyāna framework into three categories. The following section, “Synthesizing the Triadic Concepts of Good in Tathāgatagarbha Thought,” will examine how the three concepts of good derived in the previous section are interrelated and can achieve theoretical coherence. The final section, “The Failure of Buddhist Transcendentalism in Moral Praxis,” will demonstrate, based on the previous discussions, that the transcendentalist approach is ultimately incompatible with the establishment of Buddhist ethics and that it inevitably fails from the perspective of Buddhist practice.

1.3.2 Overview: Chapter 3

The third chapter, "Confronting Profound Dilemmas of the Self and Morality in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan Ethics," addresses the understanding of the notion of the self within the Tathāgatagarbha tradition and the Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions based on it, which have faced significant criticism since the 20th century. The notion of the self under criticism can be represented by the term "True Self" (眞我), which corresponds to the notions of Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏), Suchness (眞如), or One Mind (一心) in Tathāgatagarbha thought. As the subject of enlightenment and the potential to achieve enlightenment, this notion of True Self is considered to exist beyond the conditional relationships of phenomena. The problem arises from the perception that this concept posits an absolute self that *seemingly* exists outside the principle of dependent origination, thus appearing to contradict the traditional Buddhist concepts of non-self or emptiness (空, *śūnyatā*). This has led to philosophical debates and questions of

authenticity regarding Tathāgatagarbha thought within the Buddhist context, making it one of the most significant issues in Buddhist studies since the 20th century.

Two major debates surrounding the notion of True Self in modern times can be highlighted. The first occurred in the early 20th century between Ouyang Jingwu, Taixu, and their disciples. The second took place in the late 20th century, initiated by several Japanese scholars in the context of Critical Buddhism. Despite differing objectives and directions, both debates targeted Tathāgatagarbha thought, particularly as represented by the *Dasheng qixin lun*. This critical tendency towards the notion of the self within Tathāgatagarbha thought persists in contemporary Buddhist studies, impeding the establishment of ethical theories based on such a philosophical foundation. Since Tathāgatagarbha thought is a core doctrinal element of the Huayan tradition, and its philosophical premises are integral to the establishment of Huayan ethics, this chapter aims to elucidate the notion of True Self within Tathāgatagarbha thought.

Given the intensity of the debates surrounding Tathāgatagarbha thought and the notion of True Self, research on the concept of the self in the Buddhist context has been conducted extensively from various perspectives, both in Eastern and the Western academic circles. Consequently, it is difficult to enumerate all the achievements of such existing studies. The distinctive feature of the third chapter of this study is that it traces the differentiation process of the concept of the self, from early Buddhism onwards, within an intellectual history context. Furthermore, it philosophically analyzes how the notion of True Self is considered a fundamental premise in the practical and ethical theories of Mahāyāna traditions based on Tathāgatagarbha thought, thereby justifying the establishment of this notion. To briefly introduce this argument: the emergence of the True Self concept was, to some extent, inevitable due to philosophical issues like the problem of 'self-identity' surrounding the traditional concept of non-self. This

concept has become an indispensable element in traditions such as Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan by implying the *a priori* prerequisites for altruistic practice and enlightenment. In other words, the notion of True Self is essential within the framework of Huayan ethical theory, and thus, its philosophical support and justification are inevitable for the systematic establishment of Huayan ethics.

The structure of Chapter 3 to develop the above discussion is as follows: The first section, “The Fundamental Explanation of the Self in Buddhism: The Empirical Self,” begins with a historical examination of several early scriptures related to the notion of the self, such as the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* and the *Samyutta Nikāya*. It addresses the philosophical characteristics of the early concept of non-self and introduces the problem of ‘self-identity as the subject of practice,’ which began to emerge during the period of Abhidharma Buddhism. The next section, “The Appearance of Tathāgatagarbha Thought and the Concept of Unconditional Self: The Philosophical Self,” considers the emergence of early Indian Tathāgatagarbha thought and the concomitant concept of the True Self. This section points out that the Buddhist notion of the self has bifurcated into two forms. It defines the self as an existential entity and subject as the ‘empirical self’ and the notion of True Self, which emerged with Tathāgatagarbha thought, as the ‘philosophical self,’ an *a priori* condition of experience and cognition and a metaphysical prerequisite for achieving enlightenment. The third section, “Self, Morality, and Practice in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan Traditions,” examines the philosophical and ethical implications associated with the notion of True Self. This section clarifies that the premise of the True Self in Tathāgatagarbha thought and various Chinese Buddhist traditions based on it, including the Huayan tradition, is indispensable for moral practice, the attainment of nirvāṇa, and the systematic establishment of Huayan ethics. The final part of this section reviews the

philosophical challenges implied by Tathāgatagarbha thought and seeks solutions for each.

1.3.3 Overview: Chapter 4

The final chapter, “Moral Responsibility and the Domain of Huayan Ethics,” aims to achieve two main objectives. The first objective, maintaining continuity with the overarching theme of this dissertation, is to analyze the third philosophical background that has hindered the development of Huayan ethics: The misconception of considering Tathāgatagarbha thought and Huayan thought as mere philosophical tautologies. This misunderstanding arises from a superficial view of Huayan thought through the lens of Tathāgatagarbha's theory of mind, without a detailed understanding of the unique doctrinal characteristics and philosophical implications of Huayan, such as the teaching of dependent origination in the Dharma Realm (法界緣起). Consequently, studies that strongly assert the thesis that Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought are the same are rare. Instead, this misconception subtly appears as if it is accepted as common knowledge, making such instances easy to find. For example, this chapter reveals that this misunderstanding is prevalent among contemporary Buddhist scholars studying Mahāyāna Buddhism, as illustrated by JeeLoo Liu and Kisun Kang.⁷⁰

It is worth noting that their misunderstanding is not entirely without basis. It is an undeniable fact that from Dushun to Zongmi, five Huayan patriarchs considered Tathāgatagarbha

⁷⁰ JeeLoo Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 257-258; Kisun Kang, “中國佛教思想에 나타난 佛性の 변천과 如來藏의 해석 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China], *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 37-38.

thought central to the development of Huayan's philosophy of mind. This is evident not only from the various commentaries they left on the *Dasheng qixin lun*, which encapsulates the essence of Tathāgatagarbha thought, but also from their frequent citations of this work in their own treatises. In this context, it must be acknowledged that the main discussions in Chapters 1 and 2 of my study partially transpose the philosophical characteristics found in Tathāgatagarbha thought onto Huayan philosophy. However, unlike in Tathāgatagarbha thought, the philosophical discussions in the Huayan tradition do not stop at the philosophy of mind. Particularly, Fazang and Chengguan go beyond the scope of the mind theory presented in Tathāgatagarbha thought to analyze the causal relationships between beings in phenomena and develop these into Huayan's unique practice theories. Therefore, the moral theories of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan must be completed in distinct forms. If these two are merely regarded as identical, it becomes very difficult to capture such philosophical differences.

Therefore, in Chapter 4, by analyzing the philosophical differences between Tathāgatagarbha thought and Huayan thought, as well as the resulting differences in ethical implications, I will demonstrate that the ethical theories constructed from these two cannot be identical. To highlight the differences more clearly in this comparative analysis, I employ the ethical concept of 'moral responsibility.' The structure of the discussion is as follows: The first section, "The Problem of Moral Responsibility Implicit in Buddhism," discusses the characteristics of the concept of moral responsibility used in this study and reveals that such a concept is implicitly embedded in the Buddhist theories of karma (業) and dependent origination (緣起). The following section, "Moral Responsibility in Tathāgatagarbha Thought," analyzes the concept of moral responsibility through the dependent origination based on Suchness (真如緣起)

in Tathāgatagarbha thought, discussing its philosophical characteristics and implications. The third section, “Moral Responsibility among Beings in the Huayan Tradition,” examines the dependent origination in the Dharma Realm (法界緣起) of Huayan thought through the concept of moral responsibility, highlighting how it differs from the characteristics found in Tathāgatagarbha thought. By confirming Huayan's unique ethical system and synthesizing the analyses from Chapters 1 and 2, this section argues for the establishment of the ‘Solid Domain’ of Huayan ethics.

The final section of Chapter 4, “Further Consideration: Application of Huayan Philosophy to AI Ethics,” addresses the second objective of this chapter, which is to explore the potential for applying the Huayan ethical framework to practical ethical issues. While this study is not the first to employ Huayan ethics in addressing contemporary philosophical issues, some scholars from both the East and the West have utilized Huayan philosophy for significant philosophical issues such as bioethics and environmental ethics. This section seeks to apply Huayan ethical theory to the use and regulation of AI technology, particularly machine learning, which has emerged as a major philosophical issue since its prominence in the 2012 ImageNet Challenge. This work lays the groundwork for contributing to the discourse on AI ethics from a Mahāyāna Buddhist perspective. Therefore, rather than focusing on detailed case studies, the emphasis is on speculatively exploring how Huayan ethical theory can impose moral responsibility on all agents involved in the development, commercialization, and use of AI technology.

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Chapter 2: Is Huayan Ethics Really Possible? Transcendentalism and the Dichotomy of Good and Evil in the Mahāyāna Soteriology

2.1 Introduction

Exploring morality and ethics within Mahāyāna Buddhism is deeply rewarding. It unveils a sophisticated philosophical theory of mind, altruistic practices, and wisdom. This chapter investigates this tradition's intricate conceptualizations of good and evil, wisdom, and central ethical characteristics, particularly within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions. Tathāgatagarbha thought began to be systematically developed in China around the fourth to fifth centuries with the translations and distributions of scriptures, such as the *Rulaizang Jing* (如來藏經), *Lengjia Jing* (楞伽經), and *Baoxing Lun* (寶性論). This tradition reached its unique framework with the *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), which was later regarded as one of the most important scriptures in the Huayan tradition. This, in turn, led to Tathāgatagarbha thought becoming the philosophical core of this tradition.⁷¹

The Tathāgatagarbha teaching advocates for an intrinsic potential for awakening in all sentient beings and introduces a novel perspective on morality. For example, according to the

⁷¹ In fact, the *Dasheng qixin lun* was considered one of the most significant texts not only in Huayan but also in the Chan and Tiantai traditions. As indicated by the term *lun* (論, *Śāstra*) in its name, this document serves as a kind of exegesis or commentary on the teachings of the Buddha. However, for its adherents, it was regarded as containing teachings of a depth akin to the Buddha's original words (經, *Sūtra*), reflecting its profound significance and revered status within these traditions. See Francesca Tarocco, "Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings," *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 323-324.

Dasheng qixin lun, ethical discernment based on the notion of ‘great brilliance of wisdom (大智慧光明)’ is considered inherent qualities of the nature of mind, and are not solely reliant on empirical experiences. My exploration of these themes in this chapter mostly draws from this treatise and its commentaries by the Huayan masters, Wonhyo and Fazang. I also examine and ultimately defend the interpretations provided by the influential Huayan and Chan masters, such as Shenhui, who were significantly influenced by the teachings of the *Dasheng qixin lun* and argued for the ‘wisdom of non-discrimination (無分別智)’ that is essential for ethical conduct in the Mahāyāna path.

A significant challenge to the discourse of Mahāyāna ethics is the transcendentalist interpretation. This approach is rooted in the aspiration to transcend all dualistic notions, including moral judgments and ethical distinctions, and, I argue below, tends to overemphasize *śūnyatā* or emptiness (空) as denoting the ultimate nature of all phenomena. Popularized in the mid-20th century by figures like Daisetz Suzuki, this interpretative tradition regards moral issues as confined to human society and somewhat disconnected from awakening. The transcendentalists argue that all phenomena, including altruistic and ethical actions, are inherently empty, and, consequently, the distinctions between good and evil are fundamentally illusory and lack inherent ‘moral value.’⁷² This viewpoint, I object, problematically devalues

⁷² In the field of ethics, "moral value" generally refers to the worth or importance attached to certain behaviors, actions, or traits based on a moral or ethical framework. These values are considered essential in determining what is right or wrong, good or bad, in human conduct. They serve as guiding principles for behavior and decision-making, influencing how individuals and societies determine their moral obligations and ethical responsibilities. Moral values are often derived from various sources, including cultural traditions, religious beliefs, philosophical theories, and personal experiences. They can include concepts like honesty, integrity, compassion, fairness, and respect for others. These values are not static; they evolve and change over time and across different cultures and societies.

In Buddhist ethics, particularly in Chinese Huayan Buddhism, moral values appear to be deeply intertwined with the teachings of interdependence and emptiness. This tradition emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the notion that the inherent nature (*svabhāva*) of the mind is empty, but full of inherent virtues.

ethical conduct by placing ultimate truth beyond the reach of our *samsāric* or this worldly existence with its moral dualities.

The problem with the transcendentalist interpretation, then, is that it can foster an ethical nihilism by implying that because ultimate reality transcends good and evil, all distinctions between good and evil are either irrelevant to or obstructive for the path to awakening. This creates a tension within Buddhist ethical discourse by potentially undermining the significance of moral conduct and ethical considerations, which are essential for the journey of a Bodhisattva who delays their own attainment of the final awakening because of they are committed to saving all sentient beings before attaining it. Importantly, transcendentalists do not outright dismiss the practice of good deeds, but they sometimes warn against becoming overly involved with these deeds or their moral implications. I challenge this approach by arguing that because the essence of ethics lies in the judgment and pursuit of good over evil, the transcendentalist approach is incompatible with Buddhist ethics. Notice too that the transcendentalist perspective poses a subtle challenge to the conventional Mahāyāna ethical discourse, which typically emphasizes the cultivation of benevolent mind and regards the practice of good deeds as integral to the path towards enlightenment.

Within the Mahāyāna tradition, then, moral elements are not merely ancillary and the incompatibility of the transcendentalist interpretation—predominantly influenced by Japanese Buddhist scholars—with morality has been criticized by some contemporary Buddhist scholars. I am not, in other words, the only scholar criticizing the transcendentalists interpretation for being incompatible with fundamental tenets of the Mahāyāna tradition. For instance, A. D. Brear

Such understanding fosters moral values like compassion and non-harm (*ahimsa*), as it recognizes the mutual dependence and shared nature of all existence. This perspective influences ethical decisions, promoting actions that contribute to the well-being and harmony of the whole, rather than just individual interests.

characterized the transcendentalist approach as 'antinomianism,' criticizing these perspectives for their misinterpretation of absolute statements of good and evil as relative intellectual positions. Following Brear, James Whitehill adds that the transcendentalist interpretation, as reinterpreted by Suzuki, lacks any possible type of ethics. However, the core premise of the transcendentalist approach — its positing of good and evil as mere relative opposites — has not yet been thoroughly criticized and this is what I do in this chapter. I show that reconciling the issue of ethics with the ultimate goal of awakening within the Mahāyāna tradition necessitates understanding the distinction between good and evil in Buddhism as neither merely relative nor conditional. I defend the unconditional significance of good and evil in moral discourse within the Mahāyāna tradition—especially as we find these ideas in the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions—as part of demonstrating the inseparable relationship between Nirvāṇa and morality.

This chapter's first section ("An Intricate Obstacle: Contemporary Buddhist Transcendentalism") presents with an analytical exploration of the transcendentalist approach previously mentioned, scrutinizing the existing discourse and critiques pertinent to this philosophical stance. The second section ("Another Perspective on Buddhist Transcendentalism: Analyzing Good and Evil within the Mahāyāna Framework") delves into a meta-ethical examination of the notions of good and evil as conceptualized within the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. At least three types of conceptualizations of good are identified: 1) Relative good as deeds classified based on their impact on the path to enlightenment; 2) Good as a teleological end that frames Nirvāṇa — the cessation of suffering and reincarnation — as the ultimate goal in Buddhist practice; 3) Metaphysical good in Tathāgatagarbha thought, which introduces the concept of Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏) as an innate source of morality. In the third section ("Synthesizing the Triadic Concepts of Good in Tathāgatagarbha Thought"), the analysis delves

into the interrelationships among the three previously examined concepts of good, exploring how they interact and influence each other within the context of Tathāgatagarbha thought. These conceptualizations form a dynamic and intertwined ethical structure, which underscores the Mahāyāna view that true goodness transcends a mere set of prescribed actions to embody an awakened state of being, naturally manifesting itself in skillful and compassionate activities. At the core of this discussion is the notion of tathāgatagarbha—or Buddha-nature (佛性)—which signifies a paradigm shift from ‘thorough negation of self-nature (無自性, *niḥsvabhāva*)’ in early Buddhism to a ‘universal potentiality for awakening’ inherent in all sentient beings in later Mahāyāna traditions. In the final section (“The Failure of Buddhist Transcendentalism in Moral Praxis”), the analysis builds on the concepts of good and evil explored in preceding sections to argue for the transcendentalist approach's failure to fully encompass the ethical dimensions of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The discussion shifts to critically examining 'non-discriminative wisdom,' a key element of the transcendentalist framework, assessing its alignment with the core tenets of Mahāyāna. In this section, the concept of tathāgatagarbha takes a central role yet again, asserting 'non-discriminative wisdom' as essential to ethical practice in the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions. This form of wisdom, transcending basic moral categorizations, promotes active engagement in compassionate action, indicative of the inherently ethical nature of the Mahāyāna path to enlightenment. Additionally, this section explores the moral discernment in Mahāyāna Buddhism, arguing that an *a priori* understanding of good and evil, informed by tathāgatagarbha wisdom, is vital for this tradition’s ethical approach. This viewpoint challenges the idea that Mahāyāna ethics are solely empirical, illustrating the interplay of wisdom and compassion as influenced by tathāgatagarbha. Overall, this chapter provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of morality in both the pursuit of awakening and in carrying out

compassionate deeds toward all beings.

2.2 An Intricate Obstacle: Contemporary Buddhist Transcendentalism

The study of Buddhist ethics has often been overshadowed by a predominant focus on monastic life and transcendental themes, leading to a marginalization of ethical issues within contemporary Buddhist studies. This oversight can be attributed to the transcendentalist trend, particularly within the Mahāyāna tradition, which posits that Nirvāṇa transcends the dichotomy of good and evil, complicating ethical interpretations. Prominent figures such as D.T. Suzuki have articulated this perspective, emphasizing that moral discipline alone cannot lead to ultimate awakening, as true enlightenment requires transcending relative distinctions, including those of morality. Critics argue that this transcendentalist view may undermine the practical application of Buddhist ethics, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that integrates moral practice with the pursuit of Nirvāṇa. This section aims to explore these issues and address the current imbalance within the field of Buddhist studies.

In response to Reynolds's and Hallisey's concerns regarding the marginalization of ethical issues in contemporary Buddhist studies, Charles Prebish contends that Buddhism as a religion is frequently misconstrued as focusing solely on monastic life, neglecting its engagement with worldly affairs and the establishment of a systematic ethical framework.⁷³ More than twenty years have passed since Reynolds and Hallisey first addressed the position of

⁷³ Charles S. Prebish, "Ambiguity and Conflict in the Study of Buddhist Ethics: An Introduction," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 2 (1996): 296–298.

Buddhist ethics within the broader field of Buddhist studies. During this period, however, Damien Keown's influential book, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, has initiated a paradigm shift in the study of Buddhist ethics. Prebish acknowledges the profound impact of Keown's work, noting that it has led to a dramatic increase in interest and research within the field of Buddhist ethics.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, when considering the trajectory of other subfields within Buddhist studies—many of which originated in the early nineteenth century and continue to yield new findings—it becomes evident that the field of Buddhist ethics has not been subjected to a similarly thorough examination.⁷⁵ As a result, further exploration into the ethical dimensions of Buddhism is necessary to enhance our understanding of the religion as a whole and to address the current imbalance within the field of Buddhist studies. And doing this is the purpose of this section.

Several factors may have led to the field of Buddhist ethics not having adequately attracted the attention from contemporary Buddhologists.⁷⁶ The most notable reason is the

⁷⁴ Prebish asserts that the study of Buddhist ethics experienced significant growth following the publication of Keown's 1992 work, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, as well as two subsequent conferences organized by the Chungghwa Institute of Buddhist Studies. Prebish notes that Keown himself acknowledged the 1990s as the period when the field of Buddhist ethics started to garner increased interest from contemporary scholars. See *Ibid.*, 298–299.

⁷⁵ Continuing into the 21st century, scholarly discourse in Buddhist studies frequently points out a diminished focus on the ethical importance and modern relevance of the precepts. Concurrently, there is a noticeable trend where Buddhist ethicists are occasionally met with a lack of favorable reception. As an example of this discourse, see Namkyol Heo, “오계의 일상적 실천을 위한 행위전략 모색 [An Act Strategy for Everyday Practice of Five Precepts],” *불교연구 [Buddhist Studies]* 26 (2007): 208.

⁷⁶ For example, Oksun An identifies two primary challenges in studying Buddhist ethics: 1) The difficulty in accurately determining the role and scope of ethics within Buddhism, and 2) The complexity of establishing a coherent ethical theory given the intricate connections of ethical ideas in Buddhism. See Oksun An, “불교윤리와 현대윤리학의 만남 [Understanding Buddhist Ethics in Terms of Contemporary Ethics],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 12 (2005): 2; Similarly, Cho suggests that the neglect of Buddhist ethics as a field of study may be due to the occasionally inconsistent or contradictory answers to ethical questions found within the broader body of Buddhist literature. See Sungtaek Cho, “불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 246–247; Edelglass further highlights that the Buddhist tradition lacks a direct counterpart to the Western concept of *ethics*. This absence could be a fundamental reason for the insufficient study of Buddhist ethics, as there is no precise equivalent in Buddhism for not only *ethics*

dominating influence of transcendentalist trend, which emphasizes the transcendence of Nirvāṇa concerning the discrimination of good and evil. This trend, also referred to as contemporary Buddhist *antinomianism*,⁷⁷ has been a prominent in East Asian Buddhist traditions and continues to perplex some Buddhist ethicists who are attempting to understand the notions of good and evil in the Buddhist context. Buddhist transcendentalism, particularly within the Mahāyāna tradition, originates from the perspective of non-discrimination (無分別, *nirvikalpa*), which perceives Nirvāṇa and Samsāra as identical. This viewpoint may initially be attributed to the Indian master Nāgārjuna (c. 150–c. 250) and early Mahāyāna sutras such as the *Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* (摩訶般若波羅蜜多心經, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*).⁷⁸ However, the contemporary version of Buddhist transcendentalism was developed by Japanese Buddhologists like Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (大拙 貞太郎 鈴木, 1870–1966) and Masao Abe (正雄 阿部, 1915–2006).⁷⁹ Suzuki's

but also other terms related to the Western tradition of ethics. See William Edelglass, "Buddhist Ethics and Western Moral Philosophy," in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel (John Wiley & Sons, 2013): 476.

⁷⁷ The term "antinomianism" in the Buddhist context was initially proposed by Brear and subsequently adopted by other scholars, such as Whitehill. Whitehill contends that Zen Buddhism, as reinterpreted by Suzuki, inherently lacks any possible form of ethics. It appears that, through the use of this term, these scholars are pointing to the therapeutic perspective of Zen Buddhism, which views moral discrimination as a "self-enslaving habit of mind" that should ultimately be abandoned. See James Whitehill, "Is There a Zen Ethic?" *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1987): 9–10; also see A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 429.

⁷⁸ In Suzuki's elucidation of the ideal attitude of Prajñāpāramitā, which transcends the constraints of relativity, he cites passages from the *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā*. The quoted passages are as follows: "The monk who has committed the grave offences is not destined for the hells; he who has faithfully observed the rules of morality is not born in the heavens. ... Why? Because in the real Dharmadhatu the principle of sameness obtains and no discrimination is made between violation and observance. ... Bodhi is the five offences, and the five offences are Bodhi. Why? Because both Bodhi and the five offences are nonexistent and their real nature is not to be comprehended." See Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Second Series, edited by Christmas Humphreys (London: Rider & Company, 1950): 271–272.

⁷⁹ Han posits that the academic pursuits of these Japanese Buddhologists have political intentions underpinning their work. Specifically, their emphasis on the transcendentalist perspective serves two political objectives: 1) To highlight an Asian variant of anti-intellectual mysticism or transcendentalism as a means of countering Western orientalism prevalent at the time, and 2) To support Japanese nationalism by attributing the foundation of such anti-intellectual mysticism or transcendentalism exclusively to Zen Buddhism. See Dongik Han, "선불교 논리의 정체성에 관한 연구 [A Study on the Identity of Ch'an Ethics]," *철학논구 [Philosophical Forum]* Vol. 29 (2002): 45–47.

explanation of morality and moral disciplines aptly illustrates the theoretical characteristics of the Buddhist transcendentalist argument:⁸⁰

Morality is always conscious of itself; it speaks of decisions and individual responsibilities ... Morality can never be innocent, spontaneous, self-forgetful and divinely or devilishly above all worldly concerns. The saintly man is, therefore, to be distinguished from the moral man.⁸¹

Moral discipline which belongs in the order of relativity is not enough, inasmuch as we are finite beings, to attain the infinite ... Moral discipline as such will never lead us to the realization of the Self which is the absolute subjectum of our being, for morality relies on the self-power and the self-power can never transcend itself to do this; the self-power must negate itself which means to abandon itself, deny itself, abrogate its claims to be the means of reaching the infinite ... Morality has its own function to perform in human society ... To awaken the religious consciousness ... we must resort to another method of discipline than mere morality and intellection, both of which belong in the plane of relativity.⁸²

In line with the Japanese Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗) interpretation, which emphasizes Other-Power (他力, Japanese: *tariki*) over Self-Power (自力, Japanese: *jiriki*) in practices, Suzuki's perspective, as expressed in the above quotations, suggests that morality concerns matters pertaining to the individual or self, and therefore cannot be liberated from the discrimination between subject and object. In other words, morality alone cannot lead a practitioner to Nirvāṇa. On this

⁸⁰ The appropriateness of using the term "transcendentalist" to describe this argument could be debated. However, it is worth noting that Suzuki himself frequently employed the term. As illustrated in his writing, "Zen and Jōdo: Two Types of Buddhist Experiences," he seems to have considered Zen awakening as belonging to "a transcendental realm beyond the reach of birth-and-death." See Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Zen and Jōdo, Two Types of Buddhist Experiences," in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 34; James C. Dobbins, who wrote the introduction to *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, observes that Suzuki's "nonrationalist interpretation of religion" was partly inspired by "Transcendentalist traditions in the West." See Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): xiv.

⁸¹ Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Ethics and Zen Buddhism," in *Moral Principles of Action*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (London: Harper and Bros., 1952): 606–607. Quoted from A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 429.

⁸² Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Infinite Light," in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 232–233.

interpretation, Nirvāṇa must *transcend* any type of relativity, including the relationship between good and evil.⁸³

Importantly, Suzuki does not completely dismiss the pragmatic role of morality, which entails that describing him as an antinomian may be an overly strong description. Suzuki writes:

Karma, the moral law of causation, is the principle governing human life as it endures in a world of relativity. As long as Buddhism moves in this world demanding the practice of the Eight Paths of Morality and of the Six Virtues of Perfection, the law of karma is to be most scrupulously followed, for without this law all our moral and ascetic endeavors will come to naught. But as our existence reaches out into a realm of the unconditioned, it never remains satisfied with the teachings based upon the rigid, inflexible law of karma.⁸⁴

As seen in the above quotation, Suzuki emphasizes the importance of adhering to practical

⁸³ However, Suzuki's argument does not imply that enlightenment should be understood in connection with any form of metaphysics. Rather, he directed his focus towards seeking enlightenment—namely, the true experience of one's nature—within 'everyday life.' Enlightenment, according to Suzuki, is the perception of life as it flows *just as it is*. However, due to external concepts and knowledge, we tend to distort this dynamic reality. Therefore, it is crucial to transcend external notions that hinder pure and intuitive experiences. Suzuki's perspective, advocating the transcendence of all relative concepts—including the dichotomy of good and evil—should be understood in this context. In this context, the transcendence that Suzuki refers to is not a transcendence from phenomena or experiences. See Yugon Kim, “트랜스퍼시픽 전위: D. T. 스즈키의 선철학과 비트작가의 대항문화 [Transpacific Displacement: D. T. Suzuki's Zen Philosophy and the Beat Counterculture],” *The Journal of Criticism and Theory* 25 (2020): 45-47; Based on this practicality in everyday life, Suzuki describes Zen as truly *practical*. To support this argument, he cites the Chan dialogues of Master Chaozhou (趙州, 778-897). However, the depiction of enlightenment by Suzuki also appears to correspond with that of Dōgen. He describes as follows: “When Joshu was asked what the Tao (or the truth of Zen) was, he answered, ‘Your everyday life, that is the Tao.’ In other words, a quiet, self-confident, and trustful existence of your own—this is the truth of Zen, and what I mean when I say that Zen is pre-eminently practical. It appeals directly to life, not even making reference to a soul or to God, or to anything that interferes with or disturbs the ordinary course of living. The idea of Zen is to catch life as it flows. There is nothing extraordinary or mysterious about Zen. ... I see the clouds blown away beyond the neighboring woods: —in all these I am practising Zen, I am living Zen. No wordy discussion is necessary, nor any explanation.” See D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), 74-75.

⁸⁴ See Daisetz T. Suzuki, “The Shin Sect of Buddhism,” in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 80–81. Also refer to Daisetz T. Suzuki, “Infinite Light,” in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 234. Whether the practice of the Eightfold Path is reliant on the law of karma can be a matter of debate. Furthermore, not many scholars would agree with the notion of simply equating the theory of karma with a moral law. In this quotation, however, Suzuki appears to acknowledge the significance of moral practices in Buddhism to some degree. His recognition of the positive values of discipline is also echoed by other scholars. For instance, Ives contends that there are positive aspects of goodness associated with the awakening of emptiness, such as compassion and the bodhisattva ideal. Consequently, the path toward Nirvāṇa is neither random nor amoral, even though these elements are to be discarded once a practitioner attains Nirvāṇa. See Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 41–42.

principles such as "the Six Virtues of Perfection," explaining that the principle of karma is interwoven with human life. Thus, it is clear that he does not regard morality and the practices supporting it as entirely worthless. However, it should also be noted that he highlights that upon reaching the "unconditioned realm" at the end of practice, such principles of karma may not be fully satisfactory conditions, thus demonstrating a return to a transcendental perspective.

The core characteristics of the transcendentalist interpretation of Buddhism stem from their understanding of the relationship between morality and Nirvāṇa. As Christopher Ives emphasizes, for instance, transcendentalist thinkers' engagement with the notion of emptiness does not necessarily encourage practitioners to be in a specific moral state; as a result, "moral action or efforts are of no avail."⁸⁵ Instead, the transcendentalist perspective considers these elements as potentially futile or even obstructive to the final awakening, as they can be wrongly pursued with the attachment to self.⁸⁶ To illustrate this essence of Buddhist transcendentalism, consider Suzuki's comprehension of the concept of emptiness. According to him, the absolute emptiness, the nature of Nirvāṇa, is "transcending all forms of mutual relationship, of subject and object, birth and death, God and the world, something and nothing, yes and no, affirmation and negation."⁸⁷ The ultimate awakening involves transcending any discrimination based on relativity. Consequently, this perspective considers the distinction between adhering to and rejecting morality as not clear-cut. What might be inferred from Buddhist transcendentalism is that the pursuit of Nirvāṇa presents challenges to ethical interpretations, which typically rely on

⁸⁵ Ives supports the idea that Zen Buddhism possesses ethical dimensions; however, he also concedes that the Zen tradition must further elaborate on how Nirvāṇa, which emphasizes negation in this context, can coherently integrate the discrimination of "good and evil." See Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 47–48.

⁸⁶ Daisetz T. Suzuki, "Infinite Light," in *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Volume II, ed. James C. Dobbins and Richard M. Jaffe (University of California Press, 2015): 234.

⁸⁷ Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (Routledge Classics, 2002): 23.

established standards for moral evaluation.

Suzuki was a prominent Buddhologist, known for his extensive studies on Southern Chan (南宗禪), the *Lankāvatāra Sutra* (楞伽經), and the manuscripts from Dunhuang (敦煌). He was also renowned as a missionary of Zen Buddhism who introduced it to America alongside his teacher Soyen Shaku (宗演釋, 1860-1919).⁸⁸ He translated the *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論) into English (*The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*, 1900) and authored *Essays in Zen Buddhism Series* (1927-1934) and *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1934). Suzuki's translation, published in 1900, is reported to be the first English translation of the *Dasheng qixin lun*.⁸⁹ Additionally, in 1921 he initiated the publication of an international journal, *Eastern Buddhist*, at Otani University. According to Tarocco, Suzuki's efforts to spread Buddhism in North America spanned over sixty years.⁹⁰ Suzuki's ideas on Zen Buddhism, characterized by himself as *speculative mysticism*,⁹¹ may contain some controversial points. However, their influence on

⁸⁸ For an examination of Suzuki's academic background and the reasons his thought gained significant influence in the United States, refer to the following study: Hyekyung Jee, “선불교의 미국화 과정 연구: 스즈키 선의 형성과 토착화 과정을 중심으로 [Americanized Zen of D.T. Suzuki: How the Suzuki's brand of Zen became Zen in the United States?],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 77 (2016): 401-420; also see Jinkeon Moon, “호적과 스즈키의 논쟁: 미국 선불교 연구의 방법론적 발전의 기점 [The Debate between Hu Shih and D. T. Suzuki: A Stimulus to Development of Hermeneutics in Zen Studies in America],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 76 (2015): 69-96.

⁸⁹ Francesca Tarocco, “Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 328-337; Suzuki chose to translate and publish Śikṣānanda's (實叉難陀) *Qixin lun* (1667) instead of the more widely circulated version of it (1666), but the reasons behind this choice are not clearly known. Tarocco speculates that this later version might have been selected due to its less pronounced 'Chinese characteristics,' suggesting a possible motive behind Suzuki's preference. Tarocco's speculation might be influenced by her assessment of Paramārtha's version of the *Qixin lun* (1666), viewing it through a lens that considers its alignment with traditional Chinese or Daoist philosophical contexts.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

⁹¹ Christopher Robert Pinder, “Zen Buddhism and American Religious Culture: A Case Study of Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966)” (master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 2008): 28.

later scholars is undeniable. The early version of Buddhist transcendentalist interpretation by Suzuki has been embraced and developed by subsequent Buddhologists. For instance, following Suzuki's interpretation of Zen Buddhism and Mādhyamika philosophy, George Rupp asserts that “the defilements and evils and dualities against which moral and meditational disciplines are directed prove to be completely unreal.”⁹² He adds that this understanding is to ensure that Nirvāṇa is considered unconditioned. Similarly, Winston L. King argues that in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions, the ultimate awakening can only be attained when a practitioner transcends their ordinary motivations for moral disciplines.⁹³ Fumihiko Sueki follows a similar line of thought, affirming that any personal aspect, including efforts to avoid evil or seek good, merely belongs to the realm of Saṃsāra.⁹⁴

The Buddhist transcendentalist interpretation posited by contemporary Japanese Buddhologists is not entirely unprecedented, as the emphasis on emptiness, transcending the relativity of good and evil, has previously appeared and consistently recurred in Buddhist sutras and treatises, demonstrating a significant connection to Nirvāṇa.⁹⁵ Moreover, the prevalent

⁹² George Rupp, “The Relationship between Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra: An Essay on the Evolution of Buddhist Ethics,” *Philosophy East and West* 21, no. 1 (1971): 62.

⁹³ Winston L. King, “Is There a Buddhist Ethic for the Modern World?” *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, 25, no. 2 (1992): 1.

⁹⁴ Fumihiko Sueki, *Religion and Ethics at Odds*, trans. Anton Luis Sevilla (Chisokudo Publications, 2016): 34. It should be noted that Sueki criticizes seeking good or denying evil in order to provide the perspective of “trans-ethics.” According to his perspective, trans-ethics broadly addresses the relationships between human beings and *the others* that surpass the realm of human comprehension or ethics. To some extent, this viewpoint aligns with the Japanese Pure Land tradition, which underscores the significance of Other-power over Self-power. However, it remains evident that his position embraces the transcendentalist approach concerning the relativity between good and evil.

⁹⁵ The teaching of “Thirty-Six Pairs of Opposites (三十六對法)” in the *Liuzu tanjing* (六祖壇經) serves as an example of this point. The essence of this teaching is generally perceived as encouraging practitioners to free themselves from misguided perspectives that adhere to the relativity and interdependence of aspects. As the sutra states: “If someone understands and utilizes this exposition for their practice, he will clearly comprehend all sutras and also be liberated from two extreme viewpoints... Darkness does not exist independently; it exists only because there is brightness, and vice versa. Coming and going function as causes for one another, and the same is true for the 36 contrasting aspects.” See, “此三十六對法, 解用通一切經, 出入即離兩邊. (...) 暗不自暗, 以明變暗, 以暗現明. 來去相

understanding that the primary goal of Buddhism is the attainment of complete liberation from attachment to both self and dharmas appears to lend further credibility to the transcendentalist interpretation.⁹⁶ However, in the Mahāyāna tradition, the primary goal of Nirvāṇa does not necessarily deny the importance of morality and moral disciplines. For example, the notion of great compassion (大悲), the gracious mind of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that benevolently cares about sentient beings, positioned solidly in the practical progress toward achieving Nirvāṇa, implies that the Mahāyāna teaching cannot be isolated from the realm of ethics.⁹⁷ In Mahāyāna texts, the ideal ways of practice and understanding of reality are frequently illustrated as involving morality as an important component.⁹⁸ This point necessitates a consistent explanation of the relationship between awakening and morality.

Several Buddhologists have criticized the transcendentalist interpretation, arguing that this approach is unproductive for the development of Buddhist ethics. For example, by examining the presence of ethical imperatives from Dōgen's (道元, 1200-1253) *Shōbōgenzō* (正法眼藏), Brear contends that the ultimate awakening, even in the Zen Buddhist tradition interpreted

因, 三十六對亦復如是。” Fahai (法海), *Liuzu tanjing* (六祖壇經), T.48.2007.0343c02-10; One point worth noting is that although the aforementioned explanation of the 36 contrasting aspects acknowledges the relativity of dharmas, it does not explicitly negate the differences in moral implication that each relative aspect may possess, as transcendentalists argue. In the tradition of Southern Chan during the Tang and Song dynasties, on which Suzuki relies, the emphasis on relativity appears to be more concerned with a particular 'attitude' towards relative dharmas. For example, in *Chuan xin fa yao* (傳心法要), which encompasses the teachings of Huangbo Xiyun (?-850), a Chan master from the Southern Chan school of Tang Dynasty, there is a cautionary message that both creating good and evil can be 'attachments to phenomena.' See “造惡造善皆是着相. 着相造惡枉受輪迴, 着相造善枉受勞苦. 總不如言下便自認取本法.” Peixiu (裴休), *Chuan xin fa yao* (傳心法要), T.48.2012A.0380b09-11.

⁹⁶ Oksun An, “불교윤리와 현대윤리학의 만남 [Understanding Buddhist Ethics in Terms of Contemporary Ethics],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 12 (2005): 1.

⁹⁷ A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 435.

⁹⁸ Oksun An, “불교윤리와 현대윤리학의 만남 [Understanding Buddhist Ethics in Terms of Contemporary Ethics],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 12 (2005): 3.

by Suzuki, includes certain "basic patterns of moral behavior" and requires "certain moral and intellectual preconditions" that align with perfect wisdom and great compassion.⁹⁹ According to Brear, Dōgen describes that "all the other enlightened Masters and Patriarchs who attained the way observed the Precepts and the proprieties and esteemed highly even the slightest good."¹⁰⁰ Brear then argues that Buddhist antinomians such as Suzuki mistook absolute statements of good and evil as "relative intellectual positions."¹⁰¹ Acknowledging that the overwhelming emphasis on non-discrimination between good and evil has led many to view the Zen tradition as "haphazardly spontaneous," Christopher Ives also contends that Zen teaching would hardly dispel suspicions of antinomianism unless it clarifies how transcending the relativity between good and evil can be compatible with morality.¹⁰²

These criticisms of the transcendentalist interpretation by Brear and Ives are relatively moderate compared to others. Oksun An, for example, argues that the transcendentalist viewpoint misunderstands the emptiness of good and evil, because Buddhist literature clearly provides various standards for moral evaluation, which presume the difference between good and evil.¹⁰³ Criticizing Buddhist transcendentalism, Sungtaek Cho points out that notions such as no-self (無我) or dependent origination (緣起) in the Mahāyāna context are not intended to urge a

⁹⁹ A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 429.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 431.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 434.

¹⁰² Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 41; for a detailed discussion on this issue by Ives, see the following: Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 34-49.

¹⁰³ Oksun An, "불교윤리와 현대윤리학의 만남 [Understanding Buddhist Ethics in Terms of Contemporary Ethics]," *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 12 (2005): 4-5; Oksun An, "불교의 '선악불이 (善惡不二)'에 대한 이해" [An Understanding of "Non-duality of Good and Evil" of Buddhism], *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 14 (2006): 248-251.

mere epistemological shift but certain ethical practices since the original spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism is to overcome self-centeredness and practice altruistically.¹⁰⁴ The basic meaning of *bodhisattva* supports Cho's criticism by reminding us of the fundamental Mahāyāna spirit. The full name of bodhisattva is *Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva* (菩提薩埵摩訶薩埵), an enlightened being who selflessly seeks to aid others. The reason this sentient being is considered *great* is that he makes a great vow and practices upon it not just for his enlightenment, but for the salvation of all others.¹⁰⁵ Based on the perspective of consequentialism, Charles K. Fink, in turn, provides three reasons why morality is entailed by great compassion: 1) Morality leads a practitioner to blissfulness, the highest goal that a human being would naturally pursue; 2) Morality also helps a practitioner to be liberated from *Samsāra*; 3) Morality makes a practitioner benefit all other sentient beings.¹⁰⁶ Another severe criticism sees Buddhist transcendentalism as falling into wrongly-grasped emptiness (惡取空, *durgrhītā śūnyatā*), leading practitioners to mistakenly believe that it is acceptable to ignore morality and altruistic practices.¹⁰⁷ In addition to these

¹⁰⁴ Sungtaek Cho, “불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 261.

¹⁰⁵ “爾時須菩提白佛言：「世尊！何以故名為摩訶薩？」佛告須菩提：「是菩薩於必定眾中為上首，是故名摩訶薩。 (...)菩薩摩訶薩於是中生大心，不可壞如金剛，當為必定眾作上首。」須菩提白佛言：「世尊！何等是菩薩摩訶薩生大心，不可壞如金剛？」佛告須菩提：「菩薩摩訶薩應生如是心：『我當於無量生死中大誓莊嚴，我應當捨一切所有，我應當等心於一切眾生，我應當以三乘度脫一切眾生，令入無餘涅槃。』” Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什), *Mohe bore boluomi jing* (摩訶般若波羅蜜經), T.08.0223.0243b11-25; Chengguan (澄觀, 738-839) explains this notion by dividing it into three parts, that is, *Bodhi*, *Sattva*, and *Mahā*. See “菩薩摩訶薩者。辯類也。即揀非餘眾。具云菩提薩埵摩訶薩埵。今從略耳。然有三釋。一菩提是所求佛果。薩埵是所化眾生。即悲智所緣之境。從境立名故名菩薩。二菩提是所求之果。薩埵是能求之人。能所合目故名菩薩。三薩埵此云勇猛。謂於大菩提勇猛求故。摩訶云大。大有四義。一者顯大。求大菩提故。二行大。二利成就故。三時大。經三無數劫故。四德大。具足一乘諸功德故。” Chengguan (澄觀), *Dafangguang fo huayan jing shu* (大方廣佛華嚴經疏), T.35.1735.0535a21-29; Also see Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, trans. and ed. Paul Groner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990): 296–297.

¹⁰⁶ Charles K. Fink, “The Cultivation of Virtue in Buddhist Ethics,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 (2013): 688.

¹⁰⁷ Jigyeon Kim, “악에 대한 불교적 이해 [The Buddhist Understanding of Evil],” in *악이란무엇인가 [What is Evil]*,

critiques, Hammalawa Saddhatissa, La Vallée-Poussin, and Rhys Davids have argued that Buddhism is, in its nature, an ethical practice.¹⁰⁸

One way to respond to these criticisms is to argue that the transcendentalist interpretation can be reconciled with the moral dimension of Buddhism. For example, one can argue that practices based on the Mahāyāna spirit or virtues are encouraged regardless of whether good or evil are considered absolute.¹⁰⁹ Alternatively, one can argue that there are absolute statements of good and evil that encompass different moral values, but that a sentient being who has attained the truth of emptiness would perceive them all as being empty.¹¹⁰ The crux of these attempts at saving the transcendentalist approach hinges on the acceptance of absolute statements of good and evil and the recognition of their inherent moral values. As long as good and evil are considered merely relative and conditional, it is challenging to establish moral appropriateness for promoting the practice of good and discouraging evil conduct. After all, if this is the case, Buddhism may remain incompatible with ethical discourse.

ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 150.

¹⁰⁸ According to Damien Keown, Hammalawa Saddhatissa defined ethics as the "essence of Buddhism," La Vallée-Poussin defined Buddhism as essentially "an ethical discipline," and Rhys Davids argued that Buddhism is ethical from beginning to end, leaving no room for debate. See, Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1992): 11-12.

¹⁰⁹ A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 435-437.

¹¹⁰ Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 47-50.

2.3 Another Perspective on Buddhist Transcendentalism: Analyzing Good and Evil within the Mahāyāna Framework

While the criticisms directed towards Buddhist transcendentalism in the previous section possess certain validity, the core of the transcendentalist approach remains largely unchallenged by them. This is because the above criticisms do not deeply engaged with the transcendentalist interpretation of the relativity of good and evil. For example, the research by Oksun An, cited above, presents a critique of transcendentalism by quoting passages from Chan texts that emphasize the discrimination between good and evil. In the case of Cho Seong-taek, he examines the implications of the bodhisattva and the bodhisattva path (菩薩道), which are common concepts in the Mahāyāna tradition, to counter transcendental perspectives.

If the transcendentalist interpretation of good and evil is not critically examined, transcendentalism may still appear consistent with the fundamental principles of Buddhism, which will continue to hinder the establishment of a comprehensive Mahayana Buddhist ethical theory. The transcendentalist trend portrays good and evil as interdependent and only significant in their relational context. However, Mahāyāna Buddhism offers multifaceted definitions of good and evil that extend beyond mere relativism. A meticulous exploration of these diverse understandings through a meta-ethical examination could reconcile the persistent dichotomy between transcendence and morality, thereby affirming Buddhist ethics as an indispensable pillar of academic inquiry.

In this section, I therefore introduce an alternative critique of Buddhist transcendentalism, one that delves into the various delineations of good and evil as presented within Mahāyāna Buddhism, with particular emphasis on Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought.

The characterization of good and evil within the framework of Buddhism is indispensable for the consolidation of Buddhist ethics. This is predicated on the foundational understanding that establishing 'good' (with 'evil' as its counterpoint) as a practical objective is pivotal to constructing any Buddhist ethical paradigm.¹¹¹ The importance of this endeavor is heightened given the continued influence of Buddhist transcendentalism in contemporary academic discourse.

A distinguishing characteristic of Buddhist transcendentalism is its portrayal of good and evil as entities in opposition. Within this framework, good and evil are only understood as an interdependent pair, their distinct values diminished when separated from their relational context. While this interpretation indeed captures a dimension of the conceptualization of good and evil in Mahāyāna Buddhism, it potentially overlooks the multifaceted layers inherent within the tradition's ethical constructs. In essence, the Buddhist schema offers varied definitions of good and evil, some of which extend beyond the confines of relativism.¹¹² A meticulous exploration and articulation of these diverse understandings of good and evil within the Mahāyāna tradition could potentially reconcile the persistent dichotomy between transcendence and morality, thereby affirming Buddhist ethics as an indispensable pillar of Buddhist academic inquiry.

In contemporary ethical discourse in Buddhist traditions, the general categorization of good and evil is commonly seen as derived from Western traditions, where these traditions are

¹¹¹ Haechang Choung, "General Introduction," in *악이란무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 21.

¹¹² Certainly, this study is not an inaugural exploration into the concept of 'good' (*kuśala*) within Buddhist paradigms. Definitions of this notion may span a spectrum, from more restrictive to expansive interpretations. As an illustrative example, Oksun An has proffered an encompassing delineation of 'good' in Buddhism, encapsulating practices, truth awareness, and the realization of an ideal character. My objective in this research diverges, aiming for a meta-ethical examination of the idea of 'good' within the Mahāyāna tradition. For a detailed overview of Oksun An's definition, refer to Oksun An, "불교에서의 선악으로부터의 자유 [Freedom from Good and Evil in Buddhism]," *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 47 (2007): 56.

seen as focused around concepts of physical evil (Latin: *malum physicum*) and moral evil (Latin: *malum morale*).¹¹³ For example, contemporary Buddhist ethicists will argue, the examination of physical evil in the Christian tradition has predominantly evolved through the context of theodicy.¹¹⁴ This category of evil encompasses a wide range of human experiences, interpreted as causative of suffering. Physical evil not only includes moral failings but also extends to natural calamities, diseases, and the inherent finitude of human life.¹¹⁵ Within this context, for example, the conceptualization of 'good' as it relates to physical evil may vary but has been

¹¹³ Youngtae Kim, “악에 대한 종교철학적 이해 [Understanding of Evil from the Perspective of Philosophy of Religion],” in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 쉼, 1992): 111; Spinoza delineated a distinction between physical and moral evil within his philosophical framework. He posited nature and God as identical, perfect entities, thus negating the existence of physical evil. Within Spinoza's schema, good and evil are relative terms, contingent upon human emotional states or modes of thinking. These notions lack absolute moral value, rendering them distinct from the traditional foundations of an ethical life. However, they are not devoid of utility, as a clear understanding of these concepts may be advantageous in the pursuit of an idealized human nature. Spinoza's conceptions of good and evil are idiosyncratic, setting them apart from those articulated by philosophers both before and after him. Spinoza elucidates this stance, stating: “As to *good* and *evil*, they also indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves, and are simply modes of thought or notions which we form from a comparison of individuals. For one and the same thing can at the same time be good, evil and indifferent. For example, music is good to the melancholy, evil to those who are in deep distress, and to the deaf neither good nor evil. Nevertheless, though the fact be so, we must retain these words. For since we desire to form the idea of a man, which we may contemplate as an exemplar of human nature, it will be useful to us to retain these words in the sense I have mentioned.” See, Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. George Eliot, ed. Clare Carlisle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020): Preface of Chapter IV; Furthermore, Don Garrett's analysis of Spinoza's ethical theory reveals that within Spinoza's framework, things are not named and desired as 'good' because they inherently possess goodness. Rather, they are labeled as 'good' insofar as they are desired, a principle that similarly applies to the concept of 'evil.' Spinoza's understanding encompasses an ideal model of human nature, positioning the notions of good and evil as valuable constructs to approximate this ideal. See Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Ethical Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 273-274.

¹¹⁴ Youngtae Kim posits that physical evil, manifesting in various forms, has posed one of the most significant challenges to theistic faith. According to his analysis, these manifestations of evil create a paradox for belief in an omnipotent and perfectly benevolent God. Consequently, within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the problem of evil has frequently been distilled into the issue of theodicy. See Youngtae Kim, “악에 대한 종교철학적 이해 [Understanding of Evil from the Perspective of Philosophy of Religion],” in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 쉼, 1992): 111-112.

¹¹⁵ Youngahn Kang, “악에 대한 형이상학적 성찰 [A Metaphysical Reflection on Evil],” in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 쉼, 1992): 35-36; According to Kang, the onto-theological perspective that prevailed during the medieval era integrates the concepts of physical and moral evil. Within this framework, physical evils, such as natural disasters, are theoretically perceived as consequences or manifestations of moral sin. See *Ibid.*, 43-44.

commonly interpreted by eminent philosophers such as Aurelius Augustinus (354–430), Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz¹¹⁶ (1646–1716) as an intact state of *ens creatum*, a created being. This notion is grounded in the theological belief that since God, as an omnipotent and omniscient creator, epitomizes goodness, all created beings consequently inherit this goodness as their teleological objective, and thus are compelled to seek it. In the theodicies expounded by these thinkers, evil is not characterized as an independent entity or quality; rather, it is understood as a deficiency or absence of good.¹¹⁷

In Christian theodicean discourses, foundational assumptions rest upon the omnipotence and omniscience of God, the world's creator. Thus, the notions of good and evil delineated within these discourses may not seamlessly transpose onto Buddhist interpretations, a tradition where the notion of such a creator remains absent. Nevertheless, the Christian conceptualizations of good and evil may provide valuable insights for elucidating and categorizing the meta-ethical elements within Buddhism, a realm that has thus far been somewhat overlooked.¹¹⁸ A salient

¹¹⁶ Within the context of theodicy, Leibniz delineates three distinct categories of evil: 1) Sin, characterized as moral evil. 2) Suffering, identified as physical evil. 3) An imperfect universe, termed as metaphysical evil. Gregory's analytical work indicates that this tripartite categorization can, to a degree, align with interpretations of Buddhist conceptualizations of evil. While at first glance, Leibniz's framework might seem parallel to the categories of good and evil that this paper will subsequently explore, it is essential to underscore the fundamental distinction. The concerns of theodicy have historically remained extraneous to Buddhist discourse, rendering any direct comparison or equivalence problematic. For more details about Gregory's analysis, refer to Peter N. Gregory, "The Problem of Theodicy in the Awakening of Faith," *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 70. In terms of Leibniz's categorization of evil, see Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* (Biblio Bazaar, 2007): 139.

¹¹⁷ Youngahn Kang, "악에 대한 형이상학적 성찰 [A Metaphysical Reflection on Evil]," in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 쉐, 1992): 37–44.

¹¹⁸ Edelglass observes that modern Buddhist ethicists appear to have predominantly centered their discussions on normative or applied ethics, often sidelining meta-ethical inquiries. He contends that this emphasis potentially overlooks the significance of Buddhist meta-ethical concerns. For Edelglass, it is essential to recognize that the foundational justifications for principles found within normative and applied ethics ultimately derive their legitimacy from the meta-ethical level. Consequently, he underscores the need for a more deliberate and rigorous engagement with Buddhist meta-ethical issues. See William Edelglass, "Buddhist Ethics and Western Moral Philosophy," in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel (John Wiley & Sons, 2013): 477.

passage from the ancient sutra, *Faju jing* (法句經, *Dhammapada*), emphasizes that “the Buddha’s teaching is to abstain from all evils and to achieve any kind of good. By doing so, purify one’s mind.”¹¹⁹ While a deeper exploration is required to fully grasp the meanings of good and evil in this context, it’s evident that the concepts of good (*kuśala*) and evil (*akuśala*) have deep roots in Buddhist philosophy. Moreover, the concepts of *shan* (善, ‘good’) and *bu shan* (不善, ‘not good’) that have been long used in the Chinese Buddhist tradition essentially correspond to the notions of ‘good’ and ‘evil.’¹²⁰ In response to this complex landscape, my research methodology seeks to delineate three disparate sets of definitions for good and evil within the Mahāyāna tradition. Each of these articulates a phenomenal aspect of dharmas or their inherent reality. While I posit that the first two sets resonate across all Mahāyāna traditions, the third may specifically pertain to the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions.

¹¹⁹ “諸惡莫作，諸善奉行，自淨其意，是諸佛教。” Dharmatrāta (法救), *Faju jing* (法句經), translated into Chinese by Vighna (維祇難), T.04.0210.0567b01-02.

¹²⁰ According to *Cheng weishi lun shuji*, *shan* (善) refers to things that contribute to harmony and benefit in both this world and other realms, encompassing both *sāsrava* (有漏) and *anāsrava* (無漏). In contrast, *bu shan* (不善) denotes things that oppose and are harmful to this world and other realms. *Bu shan* is essentially understood as the inverse or reversal of *shan*. See “且何名為善。論。能為此世至故不名為善。述曰。謂一一法要令此。他二世順益方名為善。謂有漏善前世益。今世益後世益。俱得樂果人。天所仰。無漏有為。無為亦爾。此世。他世違越生死。有得有證。及由涅槃。獲二世益。非生惡趣等。故並名為善。人。天樂果唯順益一世。非二世故不名為善。是無記果法故。體非是善。於後世中作衰損故。不作此解便有問言若順益名善。人。天樂果亦現益故應名為善。為答此問故說彼非。論。能為此世至故非不善。述曰。此中不善。翻善可知。惡趣苦果。今解彼文准前亦爾。但是無記苦果。令身苦故。” Kuiji (窺基), *Cheng weishi lun shuji* (成唯識論述記), T.43.1830.0418c01-13.

2.3.1 Category One: The Dichotomy of Relative Good and Evil

Within the Mahāyāna Buddhist framework, the initial conceptualization of good and evil emerges as the notions of *relative* good and evil. Buddhist transcendentalists, as we saw above, have viewed this delineation as lacking inherent practical significance.¹²¹ However, when examining the cornerstone concepts of Buddhist traditions—namely, karma (業) and retribution (業報)—it becomes somewhat radical to dismiss their pragmatic significance wholesale. The term 'karma' is derived from the Sanskrit root '*kri*,' denoting 'action' or 'creation.' Within the ambit of Buddhist traditions, it predominantly encompasses causative deeds, such as verbal utterances or tangible actions, which precipitate subsequent behavioral outcomes or states of being. 'Retribution,' in turn, delineates the consequent outcomes engendered by the karma executed by the agent. These intertwined principles of karma and retribution establish a continual cyclical dynamic, underpinning central Buddhist notions like reincarnation (*saṃsāra*), practice, and Nirvāṇa. Furthermore, it is conceivable that the definitions of relative good and evil find their foundational delineation rooted in these intricate interplays of karma and retribution. The classification of relative good and evil encompasses karmic variables, discerned as either facilitating or obstructing one's progression towards enlightenment.¹²² As these determinants appear as discernible experiences within the Saṃsāric domain, they are contingent upon

¹²¹ In contemporary Buddhist ethical discourse, some scholars occasionally overlook the moral or pragmatic significance of the relative good. Cea critiques Keown's ethical stance, which exclusively recognizes the teleological goal as the epitome of Buddhist good, positing that instrumental facets, such as the adherence to Buddhist precepts, should be acknowledged as a distinct form of good, concomitant with the teleological paradigm. See Abraham Velez de Cea, "The Criteria of Goodness in the Pāli Nikāyas and the Nature of Buddhist Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11 (2004): 129-130.

¹²² Likewise, Wang contends that, ethically speaking, good deed and contaminated deed can be conceptualized as moral good and evil, respectively. He further elucidates that karma encompasses all human endeavors emanating from the triadic types of deeds: body, speech, and mind. Thus, within Wang's framework, the pursuit of good and the avoidance of evil are integral components in the journey toward final awakening. See Yueqing Wang, "中国佛教善恶报应论初探 [An Initial Exploration of the Theory of Karma of Good and Evil in Chinese Buddhism]," *南京大学学报: 哲学·人文科学·社会科学版* [*Journal of Nanjing University*], no. 1 (1998): 60.

particular conditions that demarcate them as being either good or evil. Encompassing both śīlas (戒) and vinayas (律),¹²³ all karmic actions undertaken through the physical body (身), speech (口), and mind (意) —collectively recognized as the triadic types of deeds (三業) — can be situated within this category of relative good and evil. There exists a multifaceted interpretation of the foundational ideas of karma and retribution. When one engages with the framework that underscores the practical and ethical significance of virtuous deeds (善業), the relative good is delineated as deeds leading to positive retribution or meritorious outcomes (功德, *puñña*), both of which are instrumental in advancing towards the ultimate awakening.¹²⁴ Practitioners are thus driven to actuate the relative good with the pragmatic intent of accruing merits or reaping the benefits of good retribution.¹²⁵ This form of good, hence, might be characterized as both

¹²³ Within East Asian Buddhist traditions, it is prevalent to amalgamate śīla and vinaya into a singular term, often used to signify the overarching notion of Buddhist precepts (戒律). However, a closer examination reveals distinct connotations within these two notions. Śīla typically encompasses voluntary sets of moral rules or habits, cultivated with the intent of refining the practitioner's character toward perfection. Conversely, vinaya is comprised of heteronomous rule sets aimed at preserving harmony and order within monastic life. Śīla and vinaya both include moral contents, but *vinaya* differs in that it entails punishments at the monastic level when these are violated. These divergences manifest in the textual traditions as well, with śīla generally depicted in the sutras connected to doctrines (經藏), whereas vinaya is more frequently addressed in the sutras associated with precepts (律藏). For the details about the difference between these two notions, see Gethin, “Can Killing a Living Being Ever Be an Act of Compassion? The Analysis of the Act of Killing in the Abhidhamma and Pali Commentaries,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11 (2004): 169-171; Sunghyun Shin, “동아시아 계율 이해 연구 [A Study on Understanding of Vinaya Pitaka in East Asia],” *Studies of Seon Culture* 19 (2015): 117-120; Jigyeon Kim, “악에 대한 불교적 이해 [The Buddhist Understanding of Evil],” in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 151–152; Also see Charles S. Prebish, “Ambiguity and Conflict in the Study of Buddhist Ethics: An Introduction,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 2 (1996): 296; Luis O. Gomez, “Talking about Precepts and Practicing Precepts,” *中華佛學學報 [Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal]* 6 (1993): 368.

¹²⁴ Regarding this perspective, Luis O. Gomez characterizes Buddhist morality as merely a preliminary stage on the path to the ultimate spiritual goal. See Luis O. Gomez, “Talking about Precepts and Practicing Precepts,” *中華佛學學報 [Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal]* 6 (1993): 369.

¹²⁵ Yueqing Wang, “中国佛教善恶报应论初探 [An Initial Exploration of the Theory of Karma of Good and Evil in Chinese Buddhism],” *南京大学学报: 哲学·人文科学·社会科学版 [Journal of Nanjing University]*, no. 1 (1998): 60.

expedient and instrumental.¹²⁶

Conversely, relative evil might be defined as any components of phenomena that ensnares a sentient being within the relentless cycle of karmic circulation in Saṃsāra. Many instances of this relative evil are frequently diametrical to those defined as relative good. For example, the precept “not killing a living being” (不殺生) could be considered a prototypical case of relative good, given its potential to emancipate a practitioner from karmic entanglement. The implication here is that the converse action would invariably lead to karmic repercussions binding its perpetrator. Further delineations that encapsulate the relationship between relative good and evil are found in well-established classifications such as “the tenfold good deeds (十善業),”¹²⁷ “the tenfold evil deeds (十惡業),” “the fivefold evils (五惡),” or “the fivefold grave sins (五逆重罪).”¹²⁸

In the context of Buddhist practice, the concepts of relative good and evil not only delineate practical outcomes but also highlight distinct moral implications each embodies.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Sungtaek Cho posits that this instrumental characteristic of Buddhist precepts is shared across all Buddhist traditions, spanning from early Buddhism to subsequent Mahāyāna teachings. He emphasizes that the emergence of the notion of moral good, especially within the context of Buddha-nature thought, was predominantly associated with human nature as opposed to being linked directly to precepts. Moreover, Cho underscores that the minimal moral connotations inherent to precepts were repudiated within the Chinese Chan tradition, which employed transcendentalist rhetoric, such as the idea of “killing the Buddha”, without hesitation. See Sungtaek Cho, “불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 246–250.

¹²⁷ Yuming Duan asserts that the notions of “the tenfold good deeds” and “the tenfold evil deeds,” as presented in the *Sishierzang jing* (四十二章經), epitomize the core Buddhist ideology that encourages sentient beings to seek morality. See Yuming Duan, “佛教劝善理念研究 [On Buddhist Idea for Leading to Goodness],” *云南社会科学 [Social Science in Yunnan]*, no. 5 (2005): 77.

¹²⁸ Jigyeon Kim, “악에 대한 불교적 이해 [The Buddhist Understanding of Evil],” in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 146–147.

¹²⁹ Duan cites excerpts from the *Zengyi ahan jing* (增一阿含經) and the *Fenbie shan e baoying jing* (分別善惡報應經)

According to the foundational principles of Buddhist causality, relative good results in positive outcomes for practitioners, whereas relative evil forecasts adverse consequences.¹³⁰ This binary, as illustrated in sutras and treatises attributed to the Buddha or venerated masters, emphasizes the moral obligation of pursuing good and avoiding evil. This moral distinction appears to be universally recognized across all Buddhist traditions.¹³¹ Given the difficulty in ensuring the justifiability of Buddhist practice without a foundational premise on the value of cause and effect, this might not be surprising.

However, in the intricate landscape of Buddhist thought, the delineations of relative good and evil often are contextually contingent. This observation becomes particularly salient in the diverse interpretations surrounding śīla and vinaya throughout history. In the historical development of Buddhist precepts, the śīlas and vinayas originating from India underwent significant adaptations to accommodate the distinct socio-political environment of China. While the *Dharmagupta-vinaya* (*Sifen lü* 四分律), encapsulating 250 rules with Indian origins, has been acknowledged by many monastic circles as a foundational set of precepts, its practical significance in East Asian monastic traditions was not unequivocal. Instead, later precept compilations, such as the *Fanwang jing* (梵網經) and various editions of *Qinggui* (清規), were posited as more consonant with regional contexts, thereby shaping distinct monastic practices.

to illustrate this argument. See Yuming Duan, "佛教劝善理念研究 [On Buddhist Idea for Leading to Goodness]," *云南社会科学* [*Social Science in Yunnan*], no. 5 (2005): 78.

¹³⁰ Buddhist causality undoubtedly represents a form of *religious* causality, wherein a specific cause inevitably results in an outcome bearing the same moral or practical quality as the cause itself. This attribute of Buddhist causality stands in stark contrast to the philosophical understanding of causality, which merely posits that every consequence has an antecedent cause. Wang posits that any Buddhist context emphasizing the pursuit of moral good is rooted in this concept of religious causality. See Yueqing Wang, "中国佛教善恶报应论初探 [An Initial Exploration of the Theory of Karma of Good and Evil in Chinese Buddhism]," *南京大学学报: 哲学·人文科学·社会科学版* [*Journal of Nanjing University*], no. 1 (1998): 61.

¹³¹ Charles K. Fink, "The Cultivation of Virtue in Buddhist Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 (2013): 674.

Although a general consensus recognized Nirvāṇa or Buddhahood as a foundational objective, the specifics in guiding practices often differ, reflecting their socio-cultural milieus.¹³² There is a pronounced disparity in the directives among these various precept compilations. For instance, the Indian compilations of vinayas permitted the consumption of meat under restrictive conditions, provided the practitioner did not personally kill the animal for the meat. Conversely, the Chinese compilations of vinayas, such as *Chanyuan qinggui* (禪苑清規), imposed an absolute prohibition on meat-eating, irrespective of circumstances.¹³³

Another example can be found in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, where filial piety (孝) towards parents is emphasized to such an extent that it equates filial piety and precepts (戒).¹³⁴ This feature appears clearly influenced by Chinese socio-cultural factors. Although supporters of different versions of the vinayas might regard their preferred versions as the truth, a more neutral perspective would suggest that such variance among these compilations can be construed as a

¹³² In this dissertation, the term ‘Nirvāṇa’ is primarily used to describe the ‘ultimate goal of Buddhist practice.’ However, with the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the term ‘Buddhahood (成佛)’ has frequently been employed to denote a similar state. The Sanskrit term Nirvāṇa literally means ‘extinguishing’ or ‘blowing out,’ while the implications of Buddhahood can vary depending on how we understand the state of being a Buddha. This difference in terminology representing enlightenment can also be seen as a case of changes arising from the contextual differences in the environments where Buddhism has been adopted and practiced.

¹³³ The Chinese compilations of vinayas, such as *Qinggui*, furnish archetypal examples of these adaptations. Jarang Lee elucidates this divergence between the Indian and Chinese sets of vinayas by highlighting the differing contexts of monastic life. In India, monks who relied predominantly on mendicancy for sustenance were often without choice in their diet. In contrast, Chinese monks had the ability to be self-sufficient through economic activities within their monastic communities. Consequently, the Chinese monastic community was able to institute more stringent rules, including an outright ban on the consumption of certain types of food. See, Jarang Lee, “*선원청규(禪苑清規)로부터 본 총림(叢林)의 식생활 [The Dietary Life of Comprehensive Monasteries in the Chanyuan Qinggui]*,” *동아시아 불교 문화 [Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture]* 32 (2017): 264-265.

¹³⁴ Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什), *Fanwang jing* (梵網經) “爾時釋迦牟尼佛，初坐菩提樹下成無上覺，初結菩薩波羅提木叉：「孝順父母、師僧、三寶，孝順至道之法，孝名為戒，亦名制止。」” T.24.1484.1004a23-25.

testament to doctrinal adaptability.¹³⁵ This is not particularly surprising, considering that the vinayas extensively cover everyday aspects such as food, clothing, and habitation.¹³⁶

From one analytical standpoint, such adaptability suggests that precepts are shaped by their immediate contexts, indicating that the boundaries of relative good and evil might be malleable. This implies that these categorizations, rather than possessing absolute moral values, could be contingent upon their circumstantial associations.¹³⁷ Furthermore, one might speculate that, at specific advanced stages of enlightenment, the demarcations between good and evil become less distinct. This theoretical framework seems to resonate with the discourse espoused by Buddhist transcendentalists. Although one should not hastily undermine the moral and practical implications of relative good and evil, it remains imperative to note the vast heterogeneity of interpretations present within the broader Buddhist community.¹³⁸ Each of these

¹³⁵ The compilation and dissemination of vinayas can be deeply influenced by the dominant doctrinal characteristics of a given time period. For instance, the *Fanwang jing*, a Chinese compilation of vinayas presumed to have been written in the 5th century, explicitly adopts tathāgatagarbha thought as its underlying ideology and introduces the neologism *foxing jie* (佛性戒). This compilation rapidly supplanted its predecessors, becoming the dominant text in Chinese monasteries. One potential socio-political factor that may have contributed to the spread of the *Fanwang jing* is the first persecution of Buddhism in China. This event was spearheaded by Confucianist bureaucrat Cui Hao (崔浩, ?–450) and Taoist master Kou Qianzhi (寇謙之, 365–448) during the Northern Wei (北魏, 386–534) dynasty. The *Fanwang jing*'s acceptance of tathāgatagarbha thought was relatively compatible with resisting the persecution, which was grounded in Confucianist theories of the mind. This congruence may have facilitated the widespread circulation of the *Fanwang jing* in China. See Sangyop Lee, “범망경 보살계와 유식학파 보살계의 비교 연구 [Comparative Analysis of the *Fanwang Jing* Bodhisattva Precepts and the Yogācāra Bodhisattva Precepts],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 27 (2010): 86–112.

¹³⁶ Sunghyun Shin, “동아시아 계율 이해 연구 [A Study on Understanding of Vinaya Pitaka in East Asia],” *Studies of Seon Culture* 19 (2015): 147-148.

¹³⁷ According to Oksun An, the notion of the "emptiness of good and evil" can be discerned through three distinct perspectives: 1) Their inherent conditional nature; 2) Their manifestation as a relative pair; 3) Their emergence from the mind. See Oksun An, “불교에서의 선악으로부터의 자유 [Freedom from Good and Evil in Buddhism],” *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 47 (2007): 58–61.

¹³⁸ Contemporary Buddhist monasteries continue to adapt and evolve their interpretations of vinayas. For instance, the 10th and 11th rules in the *Dharmagupta-vinaya* censure malicious behaviors that fracture and sow discord within Buddhist communities. Such offenses are classified under Saṅghādisesa (僧殘), a relatively minor transgression, which can be atoned for through confession. Contrastingly, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism (大韓佛教曹溪宗)

interpretations merits acknowledgment and respect in line with its specific practical or doctrinal tradition. In light of this interpretative diversity, the perspectives of Buddhist transcendentalists, as situated within this relative framework, might offer a particularly persuasive lens for understanding the characterization of relative good and evil.¹³⁹

2.3.2 Category Two: Good as Teleological End

In the complex tapestry of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy, conceptual delineations of good and evil are frequently situated in relation to the foremost objective: achieving Nirvāṇa. The fundamental meaning of Nirvāṇa is 'nirodha (滅聖諦),' which signifies extinction or cessation, and this inherently implies the meaning of liberation. Recognizing the importance of this teleological aspiration is paramount, as it embodies a primary imperative embraced across diverse Buddhist traditions. This significance is grounded in the belief that achieving Nirvāṇa is the exclusive pathway by which the soteriological purpose of Buddha's teachings can be realized. Therefore, it can be aptly described as the *highest good* within Buddhism.

There may be scholarly propositions that cast doubt on the validity of this concept of the

deems similar misconduct as a severe violation under the category of nāśanīya (滅擯) in its 46th rule. Offenders, under this stricter interpretation, face expulsion from the monastery. Cha posits that this rigorous adaptation by the Jogye Order likely emerged as a strategic response during Korea's tumultuous liberation period, serving to fortify the Jogye Order's institutional position amidst societal upheaval. See, Chaseuk Cha, “조계종 종법에 나타난 징계제도와 율장의 비교 고찰 [The Study on the Difference of the Punishment Rules between the Law of the Jogye Order and the Vinaya Pitaka],” *선문화연구 [Studies of Seon Culture]* 13 (2012): 208-215.

¹³⁹ The view that posits relative good and evil as a form of entanglement (結, *samyojana*) is also held by certain scholars who oppose the Buddhist transcendentalist perspective. For more details, see Oksun An, “불교에서의 선악으로부터의 자유 [Freedom from Good and Evil in Buddhism],” *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 47 (2007): 82.

highest good, suggesting that the Buddhist traditions have rendered divergent emphases and interpretations to the Buddha's teachings. Such interpretative diversity is particularly palpable when considering the intricate moment of 'final awakening'. The depth and nature of this enlightenment remain subject to multiple interpretations. Even though the contemplation of the *reality of dharmas* is often advanced as a prototypical representation of this ultimate enlightenment, it necessitates rigorous clarification, especially concerning the terms *reality* and *dharmas*. Thus, the possibility exists for diverse interpretations regarding the nature and experience of this highest good. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the unwavering dedication to this sublime objective, regardless of its interpretative variations, remains a consistent and unchallenged cornerstone across all Buddhist traditions.

The conceptualization of 'good' as a pathway (*mārga*) leading to Nirvāṇa presupposes an antecedent foundational mode. It can be posited that the concept of suffering (苦, *duḥkha*, Pāli: *dukkha*) as elucidated in the Buddha's teachings serves as this foundational mode. As defined in the Nikāyas, 'suffering' is a comprehensive concept that encompasses not only birth and death but also sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, etc., and its essence is expressed as 'the five aggregates of grasping (Pāli: *pañca-upādānakhanda*).'¹⁴⁰ In Pāli, *pañca-upādānakhanda* is translated into Chinese as *wu shouyin* (五受陰) or *wu quyun* (五取蘊). According to the *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經), when desire (欲) is attached to the five aggregates, they become *wu shouyin*.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ "And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and distress are suffering. Being attached to the unloved is suffering, being separated from the loved is suffering, not getting what one wants is suffering. In short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering. (ii 306)" See Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995): 344.

¹⁴¹ "佛告比丘：「此五受陰，欲為根，欲集、欲生、欲觸。」" in *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經), translated into Chinese by Guṇabhadra (求那跋陀羅), T.02.0099.0014b21-22.

Thus, it can be said that suffering arises from attachment to the five aggregates, which are empty in nature. As suggested by the Three Dharma Seal (三法印, *Trilakṣaṇā dharmamudrā*)—which assert that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, all dharmas are without self, and Nirvāṇa is peace—all dharmas composed of the combination of the aggregates lack a permanent, immutable essence. In their state of ignorance (無明, *avidyā*), however, sentient beings fail to recognize the ephemeral nature of dharmas.¹⁴² Therefore, attachment to such phenomena leads to negative experiences associated with their inevitable loss. In other words, by clinging to these transient realities, they experience suffering.¹⁴³ Such entanglement in the cyclical chains of karmic retribution continues their transmigration within Samsāra.¹⁴⁴ This logic, which leads from the impermanence of all things to the arising of suffering, can be applied to all sentient beings

¹⁴² In the context of the doctrine of karma, ignorance encompasses a sequence of events within the continuous cycle of karmic causation and its resultant retribution. Specifically, the retribution one incurs serves as a subsequent cause, engendering another karmic consequence. This cyclical process persists as long as the individual remains ensnared in ignorance. It follows that the very existence of a sentient being within Samsāra suggests antecedent karmic actions, potentially from past lives, that have manifested in their present physical and mental conditions. Ignorance, in this framework, holds a foundational significance, superseding other psychological states such as desire or craving. Given its pivotal role in the cyclical process of transmigration within Samsāra, it is apt to posit ignorance as a primary source of suffering among sentient beings. As Chong articulates, this perspective might elucidate why ignorance is positioned foremost in the twelve elements of dependent origination (十二緣起, *dvādaśāuga-pratīyasamutpāda*). See Haechang Choung, "General Introduction," in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 26–27.

¹⁴³ Here, it is crucial to note that the 'negation of existence' claimed from the traditional perspective of *anattā* (non-self) does not deny the very phenomenon that temporarily occupies space and time; rather, it denies the notion of a fixed and immutable existence as a substance (常, *nicca*). Therefore, we cannot deny that we experience not only conceptual suffering but also physical pain. In fact, the fear of aging, disease, and death has been a subject of intuitive insight since the early stages of Buddhist tradition. Although Buddhist practice has primarily developed towards liberation from conceptual suffering—stemming from ignorance and the resulting delusions, which lead to unavoidable suffering—the descriptions of aging and disease show that physical pain has also been considered a subject for correct understanding within the Buddhist tradition. For descriptions of aging, disease, and death in the *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經, *Samyutta Nikāya*), see the following references: “若修四念處，即親近賢聖法者，若親近賢聖法，即親近賢聖道。若親近賢聖道，即親近甘露法。若親近甘露法，即能得免生老病死、憂悲苦惱。若免生老病死、憂悲苦惱，如是等人，即說離苦。” the *Bieyi za ahan jing* (別譯雜阿含經), T.02.0100.0410b19-23.

¹⁴⁴ When considering the ultimate aim of liberation from Samsāra within the Buddha's teachings, the concept of transmigration emerges as an essential postulation. Without this consideration, distinguishing the Buddhist path to liberation from the mere physical and mental cessation accompanying an individual's death becomes challenging.

and is expressed as the proposition 'all is suffering (一切皆苦).' This notion, in addition to the Three Dharma Seals, has also been established as the concept of the Four Dharma Seals (四法印). This existential mode¹⁴⁵ among sentient beings is further emphasized by the first of the Four Noble Truths (四聖諦, *catvāri āryasatyāni*), explicitly termed as *duḥkha*.¹⁴⁶

Within this framework, Buddhism delineates suffering as the *general mode* that individuals seeking liberation must confront and endeavor to surmount. This suffering can be analogously labeled as 'evil' when set against the Buddhist idea of the 'highest good,' signifying emancipation from such affliction. It should be noted, however, that this does not equate Buddhist suffering with the 'evil' of other religious or moral contexts; rather, it emphasizes its *inherently* negative and undesirable nature. Therefore, it cannot be said that the only Buddhist response is to 'eliminate' suffering. As seen in the practice of patience (忍辱波羅蜜, *Kṣānti-pāramitā*), sometimes enduring suffering is also considered a Buddhist response. However, as the ultimate state of nirvāṇa, characterized by calm and the cessation of suffering (涅槃寂靜, *śāntaṃ nirvāṇam*), suggests, such suffering must ultimately come to an end. The soteriological aspiration of Nirvāṇa, defined as the 'highest good,' is conceived within this context in which suffering is posited as an existential mode. This interplay between good and evil, rooted deeply

¹⁴⁵ Since suffering also includes the fear of death, it should be considered as a general existential issue applied to all sentient beings. See Haechang Choung, "General Introduction," in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 15–16.

¹⁴⁶ Regarding the English translation of *duḥkha*, Gab emphasizes potential misconceptions associated with the term *suffering*. Though frequently used as an English equivalent, suffering often connotes "intense pain or distress," which may not fully encapsulate the depth of *duḥkha*. Gab delineates three distinct categories of *duḥkha* within Buddhist contexts: 1) Suffering manifesting as physical phenomena; 2) Suffering manifesting as mental phenomena; 3) Suffering arising from the metaphysical reality of being a conditioned entity. This understanding suggests that *duḥkha* encompasses the entire spectrum of suffering that a sentient being might endure. See Sebastian Gab, "Why Do We Suffer? Buddhism and the Problem of Evil," *Philosophy Compass* (2015): 346-350.

in the foundational teachings of the Buddha, remains an immutable principle within all Buddhist discourses.

In delineating the conceptual pair of teleological good and evil within Mahāyāna Buddhism, two salient characteristics set it apart from the previously discussed relative notions of good and evil. First, the conceptualizations of the good, representing the highest goal, and evil, viewed as a pervasive existential condition, are posited as absolute, given their recognition as universal truths. This understanding of good and evil is *given* to sentient beings, transcending individual judgment or discernment, thus presenting it as an undeniable reality for all. Second, this particular set of good and evil is not confined to mere ethical dimensions; rather, it stems from existential considerations.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, the primary concern here centers on the practitioner's liberation itself. While considerations regarding other beings are frequently acknowledged, they are not inherently requisite at this level for defining this ultimate goal.

These characteristics of teleological good and evil differentiate this conceptual pair from the relative notions of good and evil, which predominantly bear moral implications. Yet, the Mahāyāna interpretation provides a broader understanding. If the teleological notions of good and evil aim to shed light on the existential predicaments confronting sentient beings and to

¹⁴⁷ This conceptualization of evil diverges from the Western tradition's notion of physical evil. Notably, both conceptualizations are distanced from moral constructs. Within the Buddhist framework, this concept of evil encompasses specific mental activities, such as attachment, which precipitate suffering. A natural disaster, for instance, might induce suffering upon a sentient being not merely through direct physical harm, but also by eradicating what the being perceives as permanent and holds attachment to. In this context, what Buddhism classifies as suffering frequently aligns with conventional interpretations of pain. This understanding is epitomized by the Buddhist idea of “the unfavorable time of the world full of the five kinds of corruption” (五濁惡世). This idea implies that both natural calamities and moral impurities (濁, *kaṣāya*) are engendered by the cognitive disarray present in the mind of sentient beings. For a detailed list of the corruptions in this idea, see Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什), *Miaofa lianhua jing* (妙法蓮華經), “舍利弗！諸佛出於 五濁惡世，所謂劫濁、煩惱濁、眾生濁、見濁、命濁。” T.09.0262.0007b23-24. On the idea of “the unfavorable time of the world full of the five kinds of corruption,” see Jigyeon Kim, “악에 대한 불교적 이해 [The Buddhist Understanding of Evil],” in *악이란 무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 147–148.

establish an ultimate goal, then the conceptualizations of relative good and evil outline the pathway toward realizing that goal. Both these conceptualizations are integrally connected within the Buddhist path of liberation. As such, the broader interpretation of the highest good, from this point of view, likely embeds ethical dimensions, as the journey to Nirvāṇa emphasizes moral engagements with others as foundational teachings.

2.3.3 Category Three: Metaphysical Good in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

The third category of good and evil, as delineated in Mahāyāna Buddhism—particularly within the Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏) and Huayan traditions—can be characterized as *metaphysical* good and evil. This characterization is predicated upon the philosophical assumptions surrounding the inherent qualities of tathāgatagarbha and the mind of sentient beings (衆生心). The term tathāgatagarbha, from Sanskrit, often translates to the “embryo” or “womb” of tathāgata (a designation for a Buddha),¹⁴⁸ signifying the innate potential within sentient beings to realize Buddhahood.¹⁴⁹ Within tathāgatagarbha thought, this potentiality is perceived as an essential precondition for achieving Buddhahood.¹⁵⁰ The *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* (勝鬘經), in discussing the concept of Tathāgatagarbha, states the following:

¹⁴⁸ Peter N. Gregory, “The Problem of Theodicy in the Awakening of Faith,” *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 65.

¹⁴⁹ Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2000): 162-163.

¹⁵⁰ Ming-Wood Liu, “The Doctrine of the Buddha-Nature in the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra*,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5 (1982): 66-67.

The *tathāgatagarbha* is without any prior limit, is nonarising, and is indestructible, accepting suffering, having revulsion toward suffering, and aspiring to nirvana. O Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not a substantial self, nor a living being, nor ‘fate,’ nor a person. The *tathāgatagarbha* is not a realm for living beings who have degenerated into the belief of a substantially existent body or for those who have contrary views, or who have minds bewildered by emptiness.

O Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the womb of the *dharmas*, the womb of the Dharma Body, the transcendental womb, and the inherently pure womb. This *tathāgatagarbha* that is inherently pure is the inconceivable realm of the Tathāgata that has been contaminated by extrinsic defilements and other virulent defilements.¹⁵¹

The excerpt delineates the quintessential characteristics of the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine, articulating that all sentient beings intrinsically encompass tathāgatagarbha, an immutable and universal substratum of enlightenment. It posits that the attainment of enlightenment is fundamentally the reclamation and realization of this inherent tathāgatagarbha.

In the subsequent Chinese interpretation of this concept, other terms such as Suchness (眞如), Dharma-body (法身), Buddha-nature (佛性), or the mind of sentient beings were employed as semantical equivalents to tathāgatagarbha.¹⁵² The quintessential characteristics of this notion are most comprehensively encapsulated in the idea of the Four Virtues (四德)—namely, unchangingness (常), blissfulness (樂), selfhood (我), and purity (淨).¹⁵³ These virtues are posited

¹⁵¹ Diana Y. Paul, trans., *The Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion’s Roar* (Berkeley: BDK America, 2005): 45-46.

¹⁵² As articulated by Yoshifumi Ueda, the notion of Suchness possesses multiple synonymous representations, including: “Śūnyatā (emptiness), animittam (the formless), dharmatā (thing as they really are), paramārthatā (objects as known in supreme wisdom), *dharmadhātu* (realm of things as they really are), *Vijñapti-mātratā* (consciousness-only), *cittamātratā* (mind-only), acitta (no-mind).” See Yoshifumi Ueda, “The World and the Individual in Mahāyāna Buddhist Philosophy,” *Philosophy East and West* 14, no. 2 (July 1964): 162.

¹⁵³ Citing from the *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), the Chinese rendition of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, Ming-Wood Liu asserts that the principal imperative of this text for its readers lies in a comprehensive understanding of the notion of the Four Virtues. Accompanying this exposition, Liu elucidates the septuple aspects of Buddha-nature as articulated in this sutra: 1) Universally attainable by all sentient beings; 2) Immutable in its essence; 3) Inherently pure; 4) Ontologically real; 5) Embodied in virtuous qualities; 6) Discernible by all in future realization; 7) Consonant with ultimate truth. See Ming-Wood Liu, “The Doctrine of the Buddha-Nature in the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra*,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5 (1982): 66–68.

as absolute and universal attributes intrinsic to sentient beings, albeit covered by detrimental defilements (煩惱, *kleśa*), just as tathāgatagarbha has been veiled since the beginningless past. As such, the ultimate awakening within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions is often depicted as the restoration of the original purity of the mind (or tathāgatagarbha) through the eradication of these defilements, facilitated by a sequence of practices. At times, the emphasis on this inherent purity supersedes the value placed on the practices themselves. This particular perspective led to the alternate designation of tathāgatagarbha thought as original-enlightenment thought (本覺, Japanese: *hongaku*).

Within the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, the term ‘tathāgatagarbha’ aligns with the concept of teleological good, being posited as the ultimate objective awaiting realization. Yet, its distinctiveness from such a concept of good becomes apparent upon exploring the ‘attributes (相)’ and ‘functions (用)’ attributed to tathāgatagarbha. With respect to these considerations, the elucidations in the *Dasheng qixin lun* (henceforth referred to as the *Qixin lun*)¹⁵⁴ appear to offer more comprehensive insights than earlier tathāgatagarbha treatises. This depth arises from its

¹⁵⁴ Generally regarded as a representative work of the third generation of tathāgatagarbha texts, the *Qixin lun* endeavors to integrate the ālaya-vijñāna doctrine from the Yogācāra tradition with its own tathāgatagarbha framework. The triadic conception of the foundational ground, attributes, and functions delineated in this treatise has ignited a wealth of discourse among modern scholars. A notable strand of this dialogue probes the potential intersections of this conception with the Taoist or neo-Confucian dichotomy of ground (體) and function (用). This interpretive framework has led some scholars to argue that the *Qixin lun* may in fact be an apocryphal text, possibly composed by a Chinese author affiliated with the Dilun school (地論宗).

The attribution of this treatise to Aśvagoṣa, the renowned Indian Buddhist master, is a matter of ongoing debate within the scholarly community. Some scholars propose that the authorship might belong to a different individual with the same name, or at least, to another Indian master, rather than the renowned Indian figure. Grosnick, for instance, posits that the *Qixin lun* could have been authored by an Indian master—potentially Paramārtha—who would have had to possess a deep familiarity with both Sanskrit and tathāgatagarbha thought. This hypothesis is substantiated by the treatise's categorizations of ground, attributes, and functions, which bear striking resemblance to those found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the original Sanskrit text of the *Baoxing lun* (寶性論). See William H. Grosnick, “The Categories of *T'i*, *Hsiang*, and *Yung*,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12 (1989): 65-78.

unique presentation of the three categories of greatness (三大): the foundational ground (體), attributes, and the functions of tathāgatagarbha. As articulated in the *Qixin lun*, these categories manifest within the foundation of Mahāyāna (法),¹⁵⁵ namely the intrinsic nature of the mind.¹⁵⁶ The treatise delineates that the mind of a sentient being possesses three distinct characteristics, each corresponding to one of the three categories of greatness: 1) Ground, emphasizing the immutable nature of Suchness (體大); 2) Attributes, highlighting the myriad virtues encompassed within Suchness (相大); 3) Functions, detailing the excellent functions that emanate from

¹⁵⁵ Āsvaghoṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), “所言法者，謂眾生心，是心則攝一切世間法、出世間法。依於此心顯示摩訶衍義。何以故？是心真如相，即示摩訶衍體故，是心生滅因緣相，能示摩訶衍自體相用故。” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0575c21-25; In the discourse surrounding the Chinese character *Yi* (義), a prevailing translation is "meaning," but this particular rendering does not sufficiently capture the specific denotation of the term as used here. According to the treatise, *Yi* refers to the three categories of greatness, which are *manifestations* of the mind of sentient beings. In this context, *Yi* serves to elucidate the particular characteristics attributed to tathāgatagarbha, a concept that transcends the dichotomy of birth and death and is, therefore, ineffable in its essence. Within this framework, both *Fa* (法) and *Yi* as discussed in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*moheyan* 摩訶衍) pertain to the same tathāgatagarbha. However, while *Fa* pertains to the 'true aspect' of tathāgatagarbha, *Yi* refers to tathāgatagarbha as *interpreted* and *understood* through the mental processes associated with birth and death (*xin shengmie* 心生滅). This difference can be likened to that between the Sanskrit expressions *bhāva*, typically meaning 'becoming' or 'existence,' and *svabhāva*, signifying 'inherent nature'.

This nuanced distinction is supported by Fazang's (法藏) commentary on the *Qixin lun*, particularly in his explication of the terms *Ti* (體) and *Ziti* (自體). Fazang contends that the use of *Ziti* in the treatise serves to specify the type of *Ti* being discussed within the framework of the three categories of greatness and to distinguish it from another type of *Ti*, which refers to the 'true aspect' of Suchness (真如). See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “何故真如門中直云體。生滅門中乃云自體等者。以所示三大義還在能示生滅門中。顯非別外。故云自也。” T.44.1846.0251a01.

¹⁵⁶ In accordance with the *Qixin lun*, the expression ‘*Fa* (法) of Mahāyāna’ serves to signify the mind of sentient beings. This study proposes "basis" as an apt translation for the character *Fa*, drawing upon interpretive frameworks offered by masters Huiyuan, Wonhyo, and Fazang. In his exegetical work on the *Qixin lun*, Wonhyo elucidates that *Fa* functions as a nomenclature for the intrinsic basis itself (自體) of the sentient mind. See Wonhyo (元曉), *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), “初中所言法者謂眾生心者。自體名法。今大乘中一切諸法皆無別體。唯用一心為其自體。故言法者謂眾生心也。” T.44.1844.0206a23-26. In their commentaries, Huiyuan and Fazang further elaborate on the term *Fa*, describing it as “*Fa* as the basis (法體).” See Huiyuan (慧遠), *Dasheng qixin lun yishu* (大乘起信論義疏), “初中有三句。一表出法體。” T.44.1843.0179a07; Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “所言法者謂眾生心，總中三句。初眾生心者。出其法體。謂如來藏心含和不合二門。” T.44.1846.0250b14-16.

Suchness and ultimately guide sentient beings towards Nirvāṇa (用大).¹⁵⁷

Fazang (法藏, 643–712), in his commentary on the *Qixin lun*, asserts that these categories exclusively encompass good characteristics. Any unwholesome elements such as defilements exist merely to be overcome and must not be misconstrued as karmic repercussions of the sublime functions of Suchness.¹⁵⁸ The *Qixin lun* articulates this position by detailing essential elements imperative for attaining Nirvāṇa within the framework of these three categories of greatness. For instance, in sections discussing the concept of the ground (自體) and attributes (相), the text categorizes profound insights into the reality of dharmas and great compassion as facets of the greatness of attributes.¹⁵⁹ This portrayal resonates with another segment in the *Qixin lun* that posits these insights and compassion as inevitable outcomes of cessation and observation (止觀) practices.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the *Qixin lun* elaborates on the magnificent functions of Suchness,

¹⁵⁷ Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), “所言義者, 則有三種。云何為三? 一者、體大, 謂一切法真如平等不增減故。二者、相大, 謂如來藏具足無量性功德故。三者、用大, 能生一切世間、出世間善因果故。” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0575c25-28.

¹⁵⁸ Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “何故唯言善。不云不善者。以不善法違真故。是所治故。非其用也。” T.44.1846.0251a24-25.

¹⁵⁹ Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), “復次, 真如自體相者, 一切凡夫、聲聞、緣覺、菩薩、諸佛, 無有增減, 非前際生、非後際滅, 畢竟常恒。從本已來, 性自滿足一切功德。所謂自體有大智慧光明義故, 遍照法界義故, 真實識知義故, 自性清淨心義故, 常樂我淨義故, 清涼不變自在義故。具足如是過於恒沙不離、不斷、不異、不思議佛法, 乃至滿足無有所少義故, 名為如來藏, 亦名如來法身。” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0579a12-20; In Wonhyo's analysis, this delineation provided in the *Qixin lun* serves to elucidate the dimensions of "greatness of ground" and "greatness of attributes." His commentary suggests that certain inherent merits (性功德), such as perfect wisdom, which are ascribed to the impeccable nature of Suchness, fall under the ambit of the "greatness of attributes." See Wonhyo (元曉), *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), “初中言自體相者。總牒體大相大之義也。次言一切凡夫乃至諸佛無有增減畢竟常住者。是釋體大。上立義中言一者體大。謂一切法真如平等不增減故。次言從本以來性自滿足以下。釋相大義。上言二者相大。謂如來藏具足無漏性功德故。文中有二。一者直明性功德相。二者往復重顯所以。” T.44.1844.0218b12-19.

¹⁶⁰ Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), “復次, 若人, 唯修於止, 則心沈沒, 或起懈怠, 不樂眾善、遠離大

incorporating concepts like *Nirmāṇakāya* (應身) and *Sam̐bhogakāya* (報身) that manifest with the purpose of liberating sentient beings.¹⁶¹ Consequently, within the framework of the *Qixin lun*, *tathāgatagarbha* or Suchness is intrinsically good. This point is not solely derived from being the apex of practical pursuit for sentient beings, but also from its multifaceted attributes and functions that tangibly assist sentient beings on their path.¹⁶² Moreover, the treatise's detailed

悲，是故修觀。修習觀者，當觀一切世間有為之法，無得久停，須與變壞，一切心行，念念生滅，以是故苦。（...）應觀世間一切有身，悉皆不淨，種種穢污無一可樂。如是當念：「一切眾生，從無始世來，皆因無明所熏習故，令心生滅，已受一切身心大苦。現在即有無量逼迫，未來所苦，亦無分齊，難捨難離，而不覺知。眾生如是，甚為可愍。」作此思惟，即應勇猛立大誓願：「願令我心，離分別故，遍於十方，修行一切諸善功德，盡其未來，以無量方便，救拔一切苦惱眾生，令得涅槃第一義樂。」” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0582c14-29; In his commentary, Fazang explicates the phrase by noting that the act of taking a vow originates from the presence of great compassion within the mind. See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “大願觀中因悲立願。” T.44.1846.0286a11; The centrality of great compassion is pivotal in the ethical framework of *tathāgatagarbha* thought, serving as a theoretical bridge between the absolute nature of *tathāgatagarbha* and the practical implications of altruistic practices. Nonetheless, the prominence accorded to great compassion is not uniformly observed across all Buddhist traditions. For instance, Sueki underscores that early Buddhist teachings did not prioritize great compassion as an essential component. Specifically, he contends that the great compassion was not integral to what Gautama Buddha attained during his ultimate awakening, suggesting a distinction between it and the path to *Nirvāṇa* in early Buddhism. In this context, Sueki proposes a bifurcation in early Buddhist teachings: one rooted in the Four Noble Truths or the Noble Eightfold Path, and the other emanating from the prominence of great compassion. See Fumihiko Sueki, *Religion and Ethics at Odds*, trans. Anton Luis Sevilla (Chisokudo Publications, 2016): 37–38.

¹⁶¹ *Aśvaghōṣa* (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), “此用有二種。云何為二？一者、依分別事識，凡夫、二乘，心所見者，名為應身。以不知轉識現故，見從外來，取色分齊，不能盡知故。二者、依於業識，謂諸菩薩，從初發意，乃至菩薩究竟地，心所見者，名為報身。” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0579b20-25; In his analysis, Fazang posits that both *Nirmāṇakāya* and *Sam̐bhogakāya* are fundamentally rooted in the *Dharmakāya* (法身), which he identifies as the mind of sentient beings. Within this conceptual framework, the source of excellent karmic functions that accrue to the benefit of a sentient being is the individual's own mind. This notion serves as the underpinning for the concept of "self-benefit" (自利) within *tathāgatagarbha* thought. See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “問若據此義。乃是眾生自心之中真如之用。云何說言佛報化耶。答眾生真心即諸佛體更無差別。故華嚴經云。若人欲求知三世一切佛。應當如是觀。心造諸如來。又不增不減經云。法身即眾生。眾生即法身。法身與眾生。義一名異也。既從法身起報化用。何得不是眾生真心耶。問義若然者。眾生心佛還自教化眾生。何故說言佛悲願力。答即此真心是佛悲願。謂無緣大悲及自體無障礙願等。即性起大用也。” T.44.1846.0275a06-16; For additional insights pertaining to this argument, see Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교 [The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening of Faith by Won-Hyo and Fazang]* (Seoul: Yehak, 2006): 91.

¹⁶² The distinctive features of the pure ‘Attributes’ and ‘Functions’ of the *Tathāgatagarbha* concept will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this research. To briefly introduce, the *Qixin lun* explains that the *Tathāgatagarbha*, or Suchness, possesses the power of permeation (熏習力), which functions as both the internal cause and external conditions for sentient beings, guiding them toward enlightenment.

explanations concerning the greatness of Suchness demonstrate that the presumed potentiality for enlightenment within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions is not merely a rhetorical flourish; rather, it offers a theoretical framework that explicates how this potentiality can be effectively realized.

Within the framework of the three categories of greatness, Suchness, as conceptualized in the tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, emerges as the quintessence of metaphysical good. Scrutinizing the descriptions in the *Qixin lun*, as well as the expositions offered by eminent commentators such as Wonhyo (元曉, 617–686) and Fazang, reveals robust moral principles underpinning Buddhist altruistic practices. The theoretical structure encompassing these principles and practices provides unwavering guidelines for practitioners. More pointedly, Buddhist altruistic practices are predicated upon a profound comprehension of the reality of dharmas. Such an understanding naturally fosters great compassion, compelling the practitioner to take a vow (誓願) for the salvation of others. This interpretation aligns with the explanation of the manifestation process of great compassion and a vow in the *Qixin lun*.¹⁶³

The significance of both great compassion and the act of vowing may resonate across all Mahāyāna traditions. However, what distinctly demarcates the tathāgatagarbha tradition from others is the manner in which these manifestations are elucidated. These two practical elements are harmoniously aligned with the superior attributes and functions of the metaphysical good—

¹⁶³ “若人唯修於止，則心沈沒或起懈怠，不樂眾善、遠離大悲，是故修觀。修習觀者，當觀一切世間有為之法，無得久停須臾變壞，一切心行念念生滅，以是故苦。... 如是當念：「一切眾生從無始世來，皆因無明所熏習故令心生滅，已受一切身心大苦。現在即有無量逼迫，未來所苦亦無分齊，難捨難離而不覺知。眾生如是，甚為可愍。」作此思惟，即應勇猛立大誓願：「願令我心離分別故，遍於十方修行一切諸善功德，盡其未來，以無量方便救拔一切苦惱眾生，令得涅槃第一義樂。」以起如是願故，於一切時、一切處，所有眾善，隨已堪能捨修學，心無懈怠。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0582c14-0583a02.

namely, the greatness of Suchness. For example, while other Buddhist traditions that do not posit the concepts of Tathāgatagarbha or Suchness tend to explain the cultivation of great compassion and vows with a focus on the individual practitioner's 'will,' traditions like Huayan that presuppose the concept of Tathāgatagarbha are more inclined to rely on the metaphysical purity or goodness inherent in Tathāgatagarbha to explain the manifestation of such moral qualities. In this context, accepting suffering as a pervasive condition within Samsāra, as articulated in the Four Noble Truths, the profound insights into reality and the ensuing compassion should be perceived as intrinsic and universal attributes inherent to Suchness's excellent characteristics.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ While there is a broad scholarly consensus that 'great compassion' serves as the foundational moral principle in Mahāyāna Buddhism, divergent interpretations of it exist. For instance, while Dongik Han posits that great compassion is both universally applicable and indispensable, he contends that it lacks a metaphysical basis, asserting instead that it arises from human epistemic experiences. This stance poses a logical incongruity: attributes derived conditionally, such as those based on human experience, cannot ensure universal applicability. Denying a metaphysical foundation for great compassion raises the unsettling possibility that certain sentient beings, irrespective of their engagement with Buddhist practices, may never attain this elevated state of mind. Consequently, this perspective calls into question the universality of Buddhist teachings, including their practical methodologies. The aforementioned logical discrepancy highlights an implicit metaphysical assumption that often goes unexamined. If one argues that achieving great compassion is universally possible through appropriate practices, this presupposes certain metaphysical characteristics inherent in sentient beings. Any proposition positing a universality concerning a sentient being or Nirvāṇa necessitates a foundational metaphysical justification.

Moreover, the apprehension of the reality of dharmas and the attainment of great compassion in tathāgatagarbha thought extend beyond mere epistemic shifts. Rather, these milestones entail a re-orientation of the practitioner's disposition towards others, delineating both affective responses and prescriptive actions. As exemplified by vow-taking, these foundational realizations also steer the practitioner's intentions and motivations in a definitive direction. This cognitive and affective transition, catalyzed by profound wisdom and great compassion, presupposes certain *a priori* characteristics intrinsic to the nature of sentient beings. These intrinsic qualities offer a rational foundation for explaining both the 'how' and the 'why' of their altruistic commitments towards others. In summary, the actualization of great compassion not only assumes but also articulates these metaphysical characteristics of the sentient mind, especially when such transformation is understood as having a universal and necessary form. For more details on Han's argument, see Dongik Han, "선불교 논리의 정체성에 관한 연구 [A Study on the Identity of Ch'an Ethics]," *철학논구 [Philosophical Forum]* Vol. 29 (2002): 54-56; In contrast to Han's proposition, Oksun An characterizes "great compassion" as an expansive moral principle that compels individuals to enact moral good and abstain from transgressions in deed, speech, and thought. She posits that, even though the great compassion is derived from the epistemic realization of dependent origination, it must nonetheless be conceived as a universal principle. Importantly, she underscores that great compassion should not be viewed in isolation but rather in relation to the specific contexts and circumstances in which it is manifested. This is because it embodies the practical excellence of *upāya*, the Buddha's skillful means. She further elucidates that śīla often serves as the primary conduit through which great compassion is actualized. See, Oksun An, "응용윤리학 방법론에 대한 동양철학적 접근 [An Eastern Philosophical Approach to the Methodology of Applied Ethics]," *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 28 (2003): 146-156; In a parallel vein to Oksun An, Gomez conceptualizes "great compassion" as a foundational and universally applicable ethical principle within the framework of Buddhist ethics. He contends that,

From the perspective of tathāgatagarbha thought, all sentient beings are assumed to be endowed with the absolute moral principles inherent in their mind—the metaphysical good. Sungtaek Cho's analysis offers an intriguing critique: the absence of such intrinsic moral principles, which leads to a relativistic understanding of good and evil, can be mistakenly interpreted that any behavior by the enlightened can be deemed justified, irrespective of its alignment with core Buddhist doctrines. Behaviors predicated on relative moral grounds are perceived as being ensnared in the duality of good and evil, thereby diminishing their inherent value.¹⁶⁵ This standpoint elucidates the reservations surrounding Buddhist transcendentalism when viewed through an ethical lens.

In the framework of tathāgatagarbha thought, another variant of evil, counterpoised to metaphysical good, finds representation in the notion of ignorance (無明, *avidyā*). Within Buddhist paradigms, this ignorance signifies an obfuscation regarding the reality of dharmas and is conventionally perceived as the *root cause* for all defilements. The *Qixin lun* delineates how ignorance precipitates discriminations (差別) between the perceiver (能見, *draṣṭṛ*) and the perceived (境界, *viśaya*). This bifurcation subsequently engenders various tainted mental

despite occasional ambiguities surrounding its specific implications, great compassion is regarded as a "fundamental ethical rule" in Buddhism. See Luis O. Gomez, "Talking about Precepts and Practicing Precepts," *中華佛學學報 [Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal]* 6 (1993): 379–380; Drawing upon expositions from Dōgen, Brear posits that great compassion functions as "the universal law," contending that compassionate action is inherently aligned with the "suchness of the cosmos." In his interpretative framework, he suggests that the term "great compassion" serves as an alternative appellation for Suchness, Buddha-nature, or tathāgatagarbha. See A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 435–436; Peter Gregory asserts that positing an absolute foundation or principle, such as tathāgatagarbha, is inevitable for the ontological anchoring of a universal ethic within the Buddhist framework. His stance seeks to elucidate the inherent absoluteness of tathāgatagarbha through an ethical lens. See Peter N. Gregory, "The Problem of Theodicy in the Awakening of Faith," *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 69.

¹⁶⁵ Sungtaek Cho, "불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society]," *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 246.

processes.¹⁶⁶ A metaphor drawn from the *Qixin lun* likens this ignorance to wind: just as wind can stir the ocean into tumultuous waves—representative of the corrupted mental activities—so too can ignorance disturb the mind. However, cessation of this 'wind' restores stillness to the ocean, symbolizing a tranquil and clarified mind.

This simile, though evocative, introduces a philosophical quandary. It implies that ignorance shares an inherent ontological bond with the nature of a sentient mind, which is postulated to be pure and unconditioned.¹⁶⁷ To elaborate, the ontological source of evil, encapsulated by ignorance, is depicted as emerging singularly *based on* the sentient mind. While this does not necessarily characterize the sentient mind as the primordial wellspring of evil, the intricate interplay between mind and evil within tathāgatagarbha thought remains a point of contention, primarily because the *Qixin lun* does not offer lucid clarifications on this relationship. According to the *Qixin lun*, the sentient mind and ignorance are inextricably linked; the depths of how human consciousness (識) becomes subject to the cycles of birth and death through the

¹⁶⁶ Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), “復次, 依不覺故, 生三種相, 與彼不覺, 相應不離。云何為三? 一者、無明業相。以依不覺故, 心動, 說名為業; 覺則不動。動則有苦, 果不離因故。二者、能見相。以依動故, 能見; 不動則無見。三者、境界相。以依能見故, 境界妄現; 離見則無境界。以有境界緣故, 復生六種相。” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0577a07-13; In his interpretation of the phrase *wuming yexiang* (無明業相) from the *Qixin lun*, Wonhyo posits that *yexiang* refers to the karmic activities of the mind which are engendered by *wuming*, the foundational ignorance. See Wonhyo (元曉), *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), “別釋中言無明業相者。依無明動。名為業相故。起動義是業義。故言心動說名為業也。” T.44.1844.0212a22-24; Commenting on the same phrase from the *Qixin lun*, Fazang elucidates that the aspect of seeing (能見相) arises due to ignorance, and subsequently, the aspect of being seen (境界相) manifests following the initial aspect of seeing. See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “第二能見相。即是轉相。依前業相轉成能見。故言以依動故能見。(…) 第三境界相。即是現相。依前轉相能現境界。故云依見故境界妄現。” T.44.1846.0262c10-20.

¹⁶⁷ “以一切心識之相, 皆是無明, 無明之相, 不離覺性, 非可壞, 非不可壞。如大海水, 因風波動, 水相風相, 不相捨離, 而水非動性, 若風止滅, 動相則滅, 濕性不壞故。如是眾生自性清淨心, 因無明風動, 心與無明, 俱無形相、不相捨離, 而心非動性。若無明滅, 相續則滅, 智性不壞故。” Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0576c09-16.

generative influences of ignorance can only be fully grasped by Buddhas.¹⁶⁸ The *Qixin lun*'s portrayal of the sea and wind suggests that ignorance is not merely a transient dharma manifesting phenomenally.¹⁶⁹ Concurrently, the treatise elucidates that through meditative practices, one can ultimately cease this ignorance.

Considering these facets of ignorance, ignorance should be understood as signifying a *mode* of the mind rather than a specific dharma such as a distinct mental activity that precipitates karmic repercussions. The *Qixin lun* articulates this understanding, defining it as the aspect of the mind from which birth and death originate (心生滅門). The inherent paradox of ignorance—its origin being inexplicable (無始) yet open to cessation—can be rationalized through this lens.¹⁷⁰

The existential premise that sentient beings already situated within Saṃsāra implies their physical and mental constitution arises from the interplay of karmic forces inherited from

¹⁶⁸ “依無明熏習所起識者，非凡夫能知，亦非二乘智慧所覺。謂依菩薩，從初正信，發心觀察，若證法身，得少分知，乃至菩薩究竟地，不能知盡，唯佛窮了。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0577b27-c02.

¹⁶⁹ The *Qixin lun* suggests that the notion of ignorance is not meant to denote a specific type of dharma, that is, a being manifesting in the phenomena, but rather it signifies the foundational source from which such dharmas arise. See “是故三界虛偽，唯心所作，離心，則無六塵境界。此義云何？以一切法，皆從心起，妄念而生，一切分別，即分別自心，心不見心，無相可得。當知，世間一切境界，皆依眾生無明妄心，而得住持，是故，一切法，如鏡中像，無體可得，唯心虛妄。以心生則種種法生，心滅則種種法滅故。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0577b16-23; In relation to this perspective, Fazang further posits that the influence of ignorance serves as the causal source for the constitution of all dharmas. See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “釋云。以心生則種種法生等故知也。此中以無明力不覺心動。乃至能現一切境等故。言心生則種種法生也。此則心隨熏動。故云生也。若無明滅境界隨滅。諸識分別皆滅無餘故。言心滅則種種法滅。此則心源還淨。故云滅也。” T.44.1846.0266a16-21.

¹⁷⁰ In the *Qixin lun*, the term 'beginningless ignorance' (無始無明) is used. According to Zongmi's (宗密, 780-841) interpretation, 'beginningless' here signifies the state of never having attained enlightenment. Our existence as sentient beings implies that we have not yet escaped the cycle of Saṃsāra, which aligns well with Zongmi's interpretation. However, the fact that we have not yet attained enlightenment does not necessarily mean that we will never do so. Ignorance can eventually be overcome through proper practice, and thus, borrowing Zongmi's words, it has an end (有終). Hence, ignorance is still considered conditional, and the term 'beginningless' in this context differs from its use in expressions to illustrate the functions of tathāgatagarbha, where it conveys the unconditional aspects. For Zongmi's interpretation of 'beginningless ignorance', see “但隨緣門中凡聖無定。謂本來未曾覺悟。故說煩惱無始。若悟修證即煩惱斷盡。故說有終。” Zongmi, *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* (禪源諸詮集都序), T.48.2015.0409a21-23.

previous existences. Such beings should be considered to remain ensnared in karmic flux; otherwise, they would not transmigrate in Saṃsāra any longer. Consequently, it can be known that all sentient beings are transmigrating in Saṃsāra with minds already tainted by ignorance.¹⁷¹ From this standpoint, as delineated in the *Qixin lun*, ignorance appears to be inexplicable, as it is simply *given* to sentient beings, shaping the manner in which their minds operate and exist.¹⁷² Nevertheless, despite its ontological association with the minds of sentient beings, ignorance does not define their intrinsic nature or tathāgatagarbha. As a result, the cessation of ignorance remains a conceivable endpoint.

2.4 Synthesizing the Triadic Concepts of Good in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

A critical query may arise concerning the synthesis of the three distinct categories of good within tathāgatagarbha thought—namely, the relative good, teleological good, and

¹⁷¹ “以如來藏，無前際故，無明之相，亦無有始。若說三界外，更有眾生，始起者，即是外道經說。” translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0580a29-b02.

¹⁷² In the *Qixin lun*, the simile of the ocean and wind serves as a compelling corroboration of this interpretation of ignorance. As elucidated by Fazang's commentary, this metaphor aims to illuminate the manner in which ignorance pervades the minds of sentient beings, subsequently precipitating the cyclical processes of birth and death within the realm of Saṃsāra. The metaphorical cessation of the wind is tantamount to the annihilation of ignorance, thereby revealing the mind's intrinsic nature, which is inherently liberated from the constraints of birth and death. See “初句真隨妄轉喻。次水風不相離者。真妄相依喻。水非動性者。真體不變喻。此顯非自性動但隨他動也。若風止滅下息妄顯真喻。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0260b04-07; In his analysis, Gregory delves into the ontological characteristics of ignorance, particularly in its association with the aspect of the mind that grounds birth and death. Drawing a parallel between the doctrine of the Two Truths (二諦) and the *Qixin lun*'s framework of the Two Aspects of One Mind, he posits that the *Qixin lun* strategically shifts its emphasis from ontological inquiries to epistemological considerations in order to sidestep the thorny issue of ignorance's origin. From Gregory's perspective, ignorance within the *Qixin lun* is articulated as a linguistic representation of a specific state of the *ālaya-vijñāna*, or the cognitive realm of sentient beings. Given that the quintessence of a sentient being's mind remains fundamentally ineffable, he contends that any ontological exploration concerning the origins of ignorance is bound to be futile. See Peter N. Gregory, “The Problem of Theodicy in the Awakening of Faith,” *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 74–77.

metaphysical good. The crux of this query centers on their harmonious integration within practices directed toward the soteriological aims of Buddhism. Specifically, is there a hierarchical arrangement, where one form of 'good' presides over the others? If so, should this form of good be prioritized in our pursuit? A reasonable resolution within tathāgatagarbha thought posits that these categories are not discrete; rather, the pursuit of one invariably encompasses the realization of the others. In this section, the aim is to analyze how the concepts of the three types of good are interconnected and to elucidate the ethical and practical implications inherent in these relationships.

The congruence between the relative and teleological good can be elucidated through an axiological framework predicated on the law of karma. Within the Buddhist tradition, certain practices such as cessation and mindful observation are deemed indispensable requisites to final enlightenment. Conversely, actions deemed undoubtedly wrong, such as killing (殺生), are viewed as detrimental, invariably hindering the path to awakening. It is essential to understand that actions invariably yield karmic outcomes in line with their moral significance; otherwise, it would be challenging to discern ways to earn positive merits from the negative ones. The Buddhist aphorism 'accumulating good brings blessings and accumulating evil brings calamity (積善餘慶 積惡餘殃)' is grounded in such a premise regarding karma and its retribution. Also, this axiological correlation is requisite for substantiating the principle of dependent origination (緣起, *pratītyasamutpāda*), a cornerstone in Buddhist thought, and thereby legitimizing the appropriateness of Buddhist practices. Should ethical paradoxes arise—such as the accrual of merit through unethical actions or the acquisition of demerit through altruistic deeds—the internal coherence of Buddhist soteriology would unravel. While the relative good and evil may

be contingent upon contextual conditions, their efficacy in guiding one towards Nirvāṇa remains steadfastly aligned with the teleological good through their moral value. Hence, the relative good serves as an expedient means that is intrinsically harmonious with the teleological good.

The concordant relationship between the relative good, characterized as an expedient means, and the metaphysical good, encapsulated by the three categories of greatness in tathāgatagarbha thought, can be assessed through two distinct lenses, each based on the depth of a practitioner's progress. The *Qixin lun* offers a bifurcated approach, determining paths based on whether or not a sentient being belongs to the cohort determined to achieve Nirvāṇa (正定聚, *samyaktva-niyata-rāśi*). Those yet to firmly set their path toward Nirvāṇa (不定聚, *aniyata-rāśi*)¹⁷³ are advised to first cultivate foundational practices to nurture faith in Suchness and the Three Jewels (三寶, *triratna*): the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.¹⁷⁴ These practices prescribed by the *Qixin lun* include the five gates of practice (五門): generous giving (布施, *dāna*), observing precepts (持戒, *śīla*), patience (忍辱, *Kṣānti*), diligence (精進, *vīrya*), and cessation and

¹⁷³ Chongsik Chun elucidates the notion of the 'undetermined cohort (不定聚)' in the following manner: "Sentient beings classified under the 'undetermined cohort' are those who adhere to the principles of causality and occupy a position within the ten stages of faith (十信). However, due to the relatively brief duration of their practices, which has yet to encompass an extensive temporal span of myriad kalpas, these individuals display an oscillating spiritual disposition. Specifically, they exhibit progress upon encountering favorable conditions and experience regression when faced with adverse circumstances. This cohort comprises individuals situated at any of the ten stages of faith, ranging from initial faith to the tenth level." See Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교 [The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening of Faith by Won-Hyo and Fazang]* (Seoul: Yehak, 2006): 509.

¹⁷⁴ “所謂依不定聚眾生，有熏習善根力故，信業果報，能起十善，厭生死苦、欲求無上菩提，得值諸佛，親承供養修行信心，經一萬劫信心成就故，諸佛菩薩教令發心。” Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0580b19-23.

observation (止觀, *śamatha-vipaśyanā*).¹⁷⁵ According to the *Qixin lun*, the efficacy of these expedient practices—a modified adaptation of the classical Mahāyāna six pāramitās (六波羅蜜, *ṣaṭpāramitā*)—lies in their capacity to develop faith within novice practitioners, propelling them toward the cohort determined to attain Nirvāṇa. Upon successful cultivation of faith, practitioners subsequently transition into this specific cohort, arousing the aspiration for enlightenment (發心). It is only at this juncture that they steadfastly embody the seeds of the Tathāgata (如來種), advancing towards Nirvāṇa without any regression.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, despite the indisputable importance these practices have on the path toward Nirvāṇa, it can be said that they serve in a sense as instrumental means, classifiable under the category of relative good.

In the *Qixin lun*, however, it is emphasized that neophyte practitioners are compelled to engage in these practices by the potent 'power of permeation' (熏習, *vāsanā*) inherent within the tathāgatagarbha.¹⁷⁷ This intrinsic power is derived from the pristine and ineffable attributes (相) of the tathāgatagarbha, which have remained intact since the beginningless past (無始). Such attributes invariably engender in sentient beings a pronounced aversion to the cyclical existence

¹⁷⁵ “次說修行信心分。是中依未入正定眾生故，說修行信心。... 修行有五門，能成此信。云何為五？一者、施門，二者、戒門，三者、忍門，四者、進門，五者、止觀門。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0581c06-16.

¹⁷⁶ “如是信心成就，得發心者，入正定聚，畢竟不退，名住如來種中正因相應。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0580b25-26.

¹⁷⁷ “所謂依不定聚眾生，有熏習善根力故，信業果報，能起十善，厭生死苦、欲求無上菩提，得值諸佛，親承供養修行信心，經一萬劫信心成就故，諸佛菩薩教令發心。” Ibid., T.32.1666.580b19-23. Both Wonhyo and Fazang construe the "permeation of Suchness" referenced in this context to signify the internal permeation (內熏) anchored in the essence (體) and attributes (相) of Suchness. See Wonhyo (元曉), *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), “言有熏習善根力者。依如來藏內熏習力。” T.44.1844.0219c21-22; Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “有熏習下答第二問。於中先辨行因。謂有聞熏及本覺內熏之力。” T.44.1846.0278b09-10.

of Samsāra, fostering a predilection for Nirvāṇa.¹⁷⁸ This framework, as presented in the *Qixin lun*, suggests that the realization of the relative good within the paradigm of tathāgatagarbha thought is intrinsically anchored in the metaphysical good. The explanation of Amitābha's (阿彌陀佛) expedient means, emphasized in the final part of the 'section on practice and faith (修行信心分)' in the *Qixin lun*, reinforces this framework. According to this explanation, even sentient beings with weak determination and capacities can, through Amitābha's expedient means, generate sufficient faith to escape the evil paths and be reborn in the Pure Land (淨土).¹⁷⁹ Here, Amitābha's expedient means correspond to the excellent function of permeation based on Suchness as previously explained in the *Qixin lun*.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, there exists a correlative relationship between the categories of relative and metaphysical good for practitioners who belong to the group of sentient beings determined towards Nirvāṇa. This group, as depicted, consists of beings whose faith has been matured over

¹⁷⁸ “真如熏習義有二種。云何為二？一者、自體相熏習，二者、用熏習。自體相熏習者，從無始世來，具無漏法備，有不思議業，作境界之性。依此二義恒常熏習，以有力故，能令眾生厭生死苦、樂求涅槃，自信己身有真如法，發心修行。” Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0578b19-24; In his interpretation of the concept of the inconceivable karmic cause (不思議業), Fazang posits that while the perfect and pure mind of sentient beings (無漏法) actively guides them toward awakening through its permeative power, it remains elusive, never fully revealing itself to them. This inherent obscurity is precisely why it is termed the "inconceivable karmic cause." See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “言從無始乃至不思議者。不空本覺名無漏法。此法冥熏眾生。非物能了。故云不思議也。” T.44.1846.0271c14-15.

¹⁷⁹ “復次，眾生初學是法欲求正信，其心怯弱。以住於此娑婆世界，自畏不能常值諸佛、親承供養。懼謂信心難可成就，意欲退者，當知如來有勝方便攝護信心。謂以專意念佛因緣，隨願得生他方佛土，常見於佛永離惡道。如修多羅說，若人專念西方極樂世界阿彌陀佛，所修善根，迴向願求生彼世界，即得往生，常見佛故，終無有退。若觀彼佛真如法身，常勤修習畢竟得生，住正定故。” Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0583a12-21.

¹⁸⁰ Christopher Callahan, “Awakening of Faith in the Pure Land Section of the *Qixinlun*,” *Pacific World Third Series* 13 (2011): 35-40.

prolonged engagement with practices.¹⁸¹ The *Qixin lun* prescribes that individuals within this category should cultivate three superior facets of the mind: 1) The discerning mind that correctly perceives Suchness (直心); 2) The thoughtful mind, predisposed towards embracing altruistic endeavors (深心); 3) The mind of great compassion, unwavering in its commitment to alleviating the suffering of all sentient beings (大悲心, *Karuṇā*).¹⁸² As elucidated by esteemed masters Wonhyo and Fazang, the manifestation of great compassion is the foundation of all altruistic practices.¹⁸³ As previously noted, great compassion naturally gives rise to the vow to liberate other sentient beings. In this context, altruistic engagements, encompassing the five gates of practice (五門), are to be conceived as the direct outcome of the eminent attributes of the tathāgatagarbha, the zenith of metaphysical good. Consequently, this modality of practice stands in contrast to that which views practices merely as instrumental means towards another end.

The congruence between these two classifications of good raises the pivotal question of whether instances exist where the embodiment of practices rooted in great compassion could potentially contravene the established Buddhist precepts designated as relative good.¹⁸⁴ Consider,

¹⁸¹ “如是信心成就，得發心者，入正定聚，畢竟不退，名住如來種中，正因相應。” Aśvagoṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0580b25-26.

¹⁸² “復次，信成就發心者，發何等心？略說有三種。云何為三？一者、直心，正念真如法故。二者、深心，樂集一切諸善行故。三者、大悲心，欲拔一切眾生苦故。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0580c06-09.

¹⁸³ Wonhyo (元曉), *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), “大悲心者。是普濟義。故言欲拔眾生苦故。即利他行之本也。” T.44.1844.0220b01-03; Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), “言大悲心者。廣拔物苦。令得菩提。故云欲拔等也。即利他行本。” T.44.1846.0279a13-15.

¹⁸⁴ On this matter, Brear presents a pertinent inquiry: What motivates a Mahāyāna master, having reached the zenith of practice where the dualities of good and evil no longer bind, to continue in altruistic endeavors and abstain from malevolent conduct? Addressing his own query, Brear argues that, although the specific principles guiding the master's altruistic actions might not be overtly delineated, it is unmistakably clear that such a master would not proceed heedlessly, devoid of moral discernment. See A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 433–434.

for instance, the Five Precepts (五戒, *pañca-sīla*), which includes the precept of non-killing (不殺生). These precepts are universally acknowledged across Buddhist traditions as fundamental to the path. Should moral dualities such as good and evil be deemed entirely relative, devoid of intrinsic moral significance, then the essence of the Five Precepts is rendered equally empty. This line of thought invariably broaches the potential scenario wherein transgressions of these precepts could be permissible under certain circumstances. However, can such a scenario genuinely apply to an enlightened being or *Bodhisattva*, expected to harbor profound reverence for Buddha's teachings and exhibit boundless compassion? Given the foundational teachings of Buddhism, which incorporate *pāramitās* and *sīlas* and *vinayas* as essential, it is impossible that such a scenario would be accepted within its framework.¹⁸⁵

If one posits that such a scenario misaligns with the foundational teachings of Buddhism, it necessitates an understanding that a non-relative moral value—which cannot be captured by the Buddhist transcendentalists' ideal of emptiness—still subtly underpins the precepts. This understanding is accentuated within the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. Here, upholding the precepts is not a mere act of piety but emerges as a consequence of the excellent attributes and functions of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Thus, the practice of relative good is inherently intertwined with the realization of the metaphysical good, making any transgression against it inconceivable.¹⁸⁶ This

¹⁸⁵ The repudiation of such a scenario does not seem to necessitate reliance on concepts such as the *Bodhisattva* or the *pāramitās*. For example, Rupert Gethin, from the Theravada perspective, asserts that as long as precepts like non-killing are violated by 'the decisive intention', the act of violating the precepts remains nothing more than unwholesome, even if the underlying motivation behind such intention benefits both the actor and related sentient beings. According to his interpretation, 'intention to kill' is not a 'sufficient condition' but it is one of the five necessary conditions (*sambhāra*) for the course of killing. Nonetheless, it is evident that this interpretation implicitly assumes an inherent moral implication attached to the acts of killing or their renunciation. See Rupert Gethin, "Can Killing a Living Being Ever Be an Act of Compassion? The Analysis of the Act of Killing in the Abhidhamma and Pali Commentaries," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11 (2004): 174-178.

¹⁸⁶ A thorough discussion may be required to understand to what degree the concept of 'skillful means' may be allowed to violate established Buddhist precepts. Certain narratives in Buddhist sutras and treatises provide parables

perspective implies that the relative good comprises a series of practices and precepts that are obligatory for sentient beings to follow, especially when guided by a profound comprehension of the reality of dharmas and the great compassion intrinsic to the nature of mind.¹⁸⁷ This perspective underscores the altruistic endeavors of sentient beings who have cultivated such compassion. Yet, the depth of a practitioner's advancement in practices might not be paramount in adhering to relative good, provided the understanding remains that all sentient beings innately possess tathāgatagarbha, mirroring that of the Buddha.

When synthesizing the relationship between the disparate concepts of good, the pursuit of relative good through a set of altruistic practices inherently aligns with the metaphysical good embodied within tathāgatagarbha, irrespective of the motivations propelling these practices.¹⁸⁸

This alignment is exemplified by the discourse within the *Fanwang jing*, a text which primarily

wherein apparent breaches of these precepts appear justifiable. A notable illustration of this can be found in the narrative of the Chan master Nanquan (南泉, 748–835) who, it is recounted, took the life of a cat to impart a lesson to his disciple Zhaozhou (趙州, 778–897). Such narratives might be invoked in defense of the proposition that any precept, deemed as a relative good, is susceptible to contravention, especially if such a violation serves a higher or foundational good. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the narrative of Nanquan is deeply rooted in the rhetorical expressions of the Chinese Chan tradition, making purely ethical evaluations potentially limited in their scope. Acts such as killing appear universally proscribed within the Mahāyāna framework.

Yet, there exists another illustrative parable that offers a potential justification for breaching precepts: the allegory of the oblivious children in a flame-engulfed house (火宅). In this parable, the act of deception—surely with a benevolent motive to lure the children away from the imminent peril—becomes emblematic of the skillful means, even as deceit based on delusion is traditionally proscribed by Buddhist teachings. In this instance, that deception is legitimized as a conduit to a more primal good: the deliverance of children from impending suffering. However, it should be noted that this act of contravening the precepts does not necessarily negate or dismiss the moral value of relative good. On this juncture, Oksun An contends that instances of precept violation in Buddhism should be interpreted as demonstrative of a prioritization of absolute good over relative good. See Oksun An, “불교에서의 선악으로부터의 자유 [Freedom from Good and Evil in Buddhism],” *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 47 (2007): 71.

¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Brear defines pāramitās as “the only possible behavior-in-wisdom, rooted in tathatā”. See A. D. Brear, “The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition,” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 436.

¹⁸⁸ Cho delineates this characteristic as the coincidence of the precepts. To elucidate, the precepts serve dually as pragmatic tools facilitating a practitioner's advancement and as foundational principles necessitating observance when one acts in alignment with the consummate wisdom articulated within Mahāyāna Buddhism. See Sungtaek Cho, “불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 245.

engages with the precepts grounded in tathāgatagarbha thought. Outlining ten grave sins and forty-eight minor offenses, this sutra underscores that their violation equates to the forfeiture of “the excellent karmic consequences of the unchanging Buddha-nature (佛性常住妙果).”¹⁸⁹ Consequently, adherence to or deviation from precepts determines not merely the practitioner’s progress along the path toward Nirvāṇa but, more fundamentally, whether they will realize the excellent functions of the tathāgatagarbha inherent within them.¹⁹⁰ Thus, within this exposition, the observance of precepts is necessitated not merely for their instrumental efficacy; it is because their pursuit intrinsically resonates with the nature of mind.

Furthermore, within tathāgatagarbha thought, the congruence between the two concepts of goodness aligns with the idea of the teleological good. This alignment is rendered more apparent given that both aforementioned concepts of good play pivotal roles in realizing the teleological good. To elaborate, the relative good, rendered as Buddhist precepts, delineate the disciplines by which sentient beings might cultivate wholesome karmic outcomes and edge closer to the achievement of the final goal, whereas the excellent attributes and functions of tathāgatagarbha articulate the rationale and methodology for the enlightened to manifest the metaphysical good they inherently possess.¹⁹¹ The notion of tathāgatagarbha, viewed not merely as the zenith to be realized at the moment of ultimate awakening but also as the intrinsic

¹⁸⁹ “善學諸仁者！是菩薩十波羅提木叉，應當學。於中不應一一犯如微塵許，何況具足犯十戒。若有犯者，不得現身發菩提心，亦失國王位轉輪王位，亦失比丘、比丘尼位，亦失十發趣、十長養、十金剛、十地佛性常住妙果，一切皆失。” Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什), *Fanwang jing* (梵網經), T.24.1484.1005a16-21.

¹⁹⁰ Sangyop Lee, “범망경 보살계와 유식학파 보살계의 비교 연구 [Comparative Analysis of the *Fanwang Jing* Bodhisattva Precepts and the Yogācāra Bodhisattva Precepts],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 27 (2010): 104–107.

¹⁹¹ Cho further contends that Buddhist precepts and practices possess a teleological nature, provided their primary aim is the pursuit of final awakening. See Sungtaek Cho, “불교의 계율에 대한 새로운 이해 [A New Approach to the Buddhist Precepts in Modern Society],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 8 (2004): 249.

wellspring of functions that galvanize sentient beings towards diligent practice, implies that these three variants of goodness are fundamentally conjoined. Consequently, in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition (and the Huayan tradition based on it), the realization of any one facet of this tripartite good necessarily entails the concurrent actualization of the others.

2.5 The Failure of Buddhist Transcendentalism in Moral Praxis

In this final section, the analysis builds on previous concepts of good and evil to argue that the transcendentalist approach fails to fully encompass Mahāyāna Buddhism's ethical dimensions. The discussion critically examines 'non-discriminative wisdom,' assessing its alignment with Mahāyāna's core tenets. This wisdom transcends basic moral categorizations and promotes active compassionate action. The section argues that an a priori understanding of good and evil, informed by tathāgatagarbha wisdom, is vital for Mahāyāna's ethical approach, challenging the idea that Mahāyāna ethics are solely empirical. The transcendentalists' limited interpretation of non-discrimination overlooks the importance of discerning practical and moral values of dharmas, which is crucial for integrating great compassion into practice. Properly understood, non-discrimination involves discerning, judging, and acting without attachment to these distinctions. The implications of these concepts presuppose an independent moral implication for each action and state of mind. The shortcomings of the transcendentalist interpretation highlight the need to re-evaluate Mahāyāna Buddhism's ethical dimensions, emphasizing its commitment to alleviating suffering and promoting moral conduct.

Transcendentalists can respond to the above by arguing that a metaphysical foundation

of morality is not a prerequisite for establishing standards of moral judgment and conduct, advocating instead that the notion of emptiness suffices to elucidate the motivations and mechanisms behind a sentient being's engagement in altruistic practices. Kurethara S. Bose's viewpoint appears to epitomize this line of reasoning. He proposes that Nirvāṇa represents a 'conceptual self-transformation,' a shift from a misunderstanding of the self as an entity independent of other dharmas, toward an accurate comprehension of the "true nature of the self."¹⁹² This misunderstanding fosters a perception of the self as a discrete substance, leading to attachment and "self-centeredness."¹⁹³ On this approach, the true nature of the self within Buddhist contexts is characterized by "solidarity" or, put differently, the interconnectedness and interdependence with others.¹⁹⁴ Consequently, a practitioner's realization of this intrinsic nature catalyzes the abandonment of self-centeredness, orienting their concern towards the well-being of others.

In my view, however, this argumentation falters when it comes to providing a compelling rationale for the commitment to goodness and the execution of altruistic practices. The problem is that the emergence of concern for others' well-being does not logically ensue from the mere abandonment of self-attachment, as the correlation between these two states remains unexplained. Therefore, one cannot presuppose that concern for others' well-being naturally follows this conceptual transformation without relying on metaphysical assumptions regarding the nature of the mind. Consider, for instance, a wealthy practitioner who, after realizing the emptiness of all dharmas (including the self), remains indifferent to the welfare of

¹⁹² Kurethara S. Bose, "The Transformation of the Self in Mahayana Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist (NEW SERIES)* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 152.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

others. Upon understanding the transience of his physical existence and material fortune, he may overcome his attachment to wealth. Faced with the stark meaninglessness of fortune and complying with the rules of Buddhist communities which prohibit holding personal wealth, he could choose to bury it in the earth or, alternatively, consign it to the river's flow. Such an individual, unattached to his own well-being due to the realization of the emptiness of all dharmas, might logically extend this detachment to a general non-attachment, encompassing even the well-being of others. What, then, compels him to allocate his now seemingly futile possessions for the benefit of those in distress rather than merely disposing of them? Although this scenario appears logically possible, it conflicts with foundational Buddhist teachings, thereby necessitating further justification to elucidate why and how a practitioner would alter his focus to prioritize the welfare of others and engage in altruistic endeavors for their benefit.

The proposition that realizing the true nature of dharmas suffices for a transformation into altruism implicitly presupposes, in fact, that the enlightened mind possesses positive attributes conducive to altruistic behavior. This assumption, considered to be of a universal nature and not acquired through experiences, establishes a metaphysical basis for the minds of sentient beings. Without such a metaphysical foundation concerning the disposition of sentient beings, asserting an intrinsic and inevitable correlation between the mind of an enlightened individual (or one on the path) and the practice of altruism becomes logically untenable. In this context, if one tries to anchor altruistic practices in foundational Buddhist notions such as 'excellent wisdom' (般若, *prajñā*) or 'great compassion' (大悲心, *Karuṇā*), these efforts would essentially provide *universal* characterizations of the intrinsic nature of the mind. Such a move would primarily rely on *a priori reasoning*, rooted in the conviction that universally shared moral qualities are inherent to all sentient beings. However, it is worth noting that such

overarching descriptions are at odds with the transcendentalist viewpoint, which perceives all dharmas as contingent and relative.¹⁹⁵ Unless these universal characterizations are articulated in a manner that postulates inherent moral characteristics of sentient beings, they remain inadequate in providing a robust foundation to substantiate the imperative of engaging in altruistic practices.

In the discourse thus far, at least three distinct conceptions of good have been identified as central to Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially prominent within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, with the latter two posited as unconditional. By perceiving good and evil solely as relative concepts, transcendentalists inadvertently diminish efforts to interpret Nirvāṇa through an ethical lens. This limited perspective may not originate from thorough meta-ethical deliberations of good and evil, but rather from an entrenched standpoint within their philosophical framework. Such an observation underscores the inadequacy of Buddhist transcendentalism in encapsulating the entirety of Mahāyāna thought. Furthermore, it sheds light on why the transcendentalists falter in integrating altruistic practices into the path towards Nirvāṇa. As previously explored, Mahāyāna Buddhism proposes various interpretations of good and evil, each significant in its unique role on the pathway to attainment. Despite this diversity, there exists a fundamental harmony among these interpretations, underscoring the philosophical relevance of altruistic practices, irrespective of one's progress on the path. This critical aspect of altruism is unfortunately overshadowed within the transcendentalist approach, wherein such practices are often diminished as relative and devoid of moral importance, or at times, outrightly

¹⁹⁵ This contention elucidates the inherent challenges in Ives' endeavor to harmonize moral principles with the teachings of Zen Buddhism. Ives posits that a Zen practitioner, upon attaining genuine enlightenment, ought to promptly revert to the domain of "the thinking self, form, plurality, and distinctions" without becoming ensnared in dualistic thought. Concurrently, he asserts that the demarcations between good and evil are only interdependent and intrinsically devoid of essence. Such a stance, however, appears tenuous when invoked as a foundational framework for moral assessments and justification. See Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 48.

rejected as obstacles. The transcendentalists' focus on the transcendence of Nirvāṇa seems to eclipse another pivotal dimension of Mahāyāna Buddhism, that of altruistic practices. This oversight becomes particularly curious when considering the development of the Japanese Zen tradition, which was transplanted from the Chinese Chan tradition, founded upon tathāgatagarbha thought. Early Zen masters such as Dōgen (道元, 1200–1253) and Keizan (瑩山, 1268–1325) of the Sōtō school (曹洞宗) accentuated the importance of moral principles.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, the Rinzai school (臨濟宗), with which Suzuki was affiliated, was deeply rooted in tathāgatagarbha thought. Suzuki's profound engagement with this philosophy is evident, considering his instrumental role in acquainting Western academia with the *Qixin lun* through his seminal English translations.¹⁹⁷

The shortcomings of Buddhist transcendentalists in integrating altruistic practices into their doctrine can also be attributed to their limited interpretation of non-discrimination (無分別). The foundation of Buddhist transcendentalism is deeply entrenched in the realization of the true reality of dharmas, which acknowledges transience or emptiness as the intrinsic nature of all dharmas (諸法無我). The suffering of sentient beings is rooted in their misperception of dharmas as substantial or immutable, thereby necessitating their pursuit towards the profound wisdom (*prajñā*) that correctly perceives dharmas. This critique does not aim to contest the validity of this transcendentalist interpretation but rather highlights that its epistemological approach

¹⁹⁶ A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 431.

¹⁹⁷ The manuscript of the *Qixin lun* selected for translation into English by D.T. Suzuki was that of Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀), a version which had not circulated as much as the rendition by Paramārtha (真諦). Suzuki did not explicitly articulate the rationale behind his preference for Śikṣānanda's text; however, he did acknowledge the substantive similarities between the contents of Śikṣānanda's manuscript and that of Paramārtha's. See Asvaghosa, *The Awakening of Faith*, trans. Teitaro Suzuki (Dover Publication, Inc, 2003): 38-41.

represents an insufficient attempt to elucidate the general ontological status of dharmas. More precisely, this interpretation delineates the existential mode of all dharmas and endeavors to rationalize the perspective from which a sentient being should engage with these dharmas. Nevertheless, it barely grasps the axiological dimension of dharmas, failing to fully articulate that a dharma's transformation can vary based on its karmic cause, resulting in divergent practical or moral outcomes. A literal interpretation of non-discrimination between Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra does not necessarily imply an absence of distinction among dharmas in terms of their practical or moral significance. This subtlety is overlooked by the transcendentalist interpretation.

Rupp's analysis of non-discrimination typifies this deficiency in the transcendentalist interpretation. In juxtaposing the conceptualization of Nirvāṇa in Mahāyāna with that in Theravāda, he posits that Nirvāṇa within Theravāda Buddhism aptly furnishes ethical criteria, due to its stress on the significance of discrimination in the process of awakening. Conversely, Nirvāṇa in Mahāyāna Buddhism, undergoing substantial shifts in perspectives from Saṃsāra to Nirvāṇa, advocates non-discrimination among all dharmas as the ultimate truth. This perspective leads Rupp to assert that this stance would consequentially devalue the importance of moral disciplines in Buddhism.¹⁹⁸ As suggested by Rupp's contention, the transcendentalist interpretation precipitously transitions from the epistemological comprehension of non-discrimination to the axiological realm of dharmas, inevitably fostering a skeptical attitude towards discourses on morality within Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The assertion that all dharmas are empty does not inherently equate their practical and

¹⁹⁸ George Rupp, "The Relationship between Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra: An Essay on the Evolution of Buddhist Ethics," *Philosophy East and West* 21, no. 1 (1971): 19–61; In critiquing Rupp's stance, Han posits that Rupp uncritically adheres to the dichotomy delineated by Suzuki, which distinguishes between the ethical orientation of Theravāda and the meditative focus of Mahāyāna. See Dongik Han, "선불교 논리의 정체성에 관한 연구 [A Study on the Identity of Ch'an Ethics]," *철학논구 [Philosophical Forum]* Vol. 29 (2002): 48.

moral qualities to be identical or devoid of significance.¹⁹⁹ Despite the transient nature of dharmas and their eventual dissolution, this aspect of dharmas does not rationalize the claim that they lack moral value or practical efficacy. Such a stance would jeopardize, or at the very least cast doubt upon, the ultimate Buddhist objective of liberation from suffering, considering the evanescent nature of suffering itself. If suffering is also considered empty, devoid of any intrinsic negative quality, the compelling call for sentient beings to foster disenchantment with suffering (厭苦, *nibbidā*) and seek liberation loses its potency. This rationale may underpin why suffering is articulated as the first general mode in the Four Noble Truths and is repeatedly emphasized as an element sentient beings *must* detach from on the path to Nirvāṇa. In essence, suffering is inherently imbued with a negative quality within Buddhist discourse, irrespective of its ontological emptiness.

On this note, the notion of dependent origination, as expounded in the *Faju jing*, offers insightful clarification. The sutra depicts that an individual harboring malicious intent and acting upon such impulses will invariably encounter suffering as its consequence, akin to a trail of a cart invariably following its wheels. In contrast, cultivating benevolence and acting in kindness results in ensuing blissfulness, as a shadow unerringly follows its source.²⁰⁰ This elucidates that good and evil, within the context of dependent origination, do not yield opposing outcomes. This principle underscores the moral congruence between a cause and its resultant effect, which is

¹⁹⁹ Oksun An, “불교의 ‘선악불이 (善惡不二)’에 대한 이해” [An Understanding of “Non-duality of Good and Evil” of Buddhism], *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 14 (2006): 229–232.

²⁰⁰ Dharmatrāta (法救), *Faju jing* (法句經), “心為法本, 心尊心使, 中心念惡, 即言即行, 罪苦自追, 車轢于轍; 心為法本, 心尊心使, 中心念善, 即言即行, 福樂自追, 如影隨形。” translated into Chinese by Vighna (維祇難), T.04.0210.0562a13-16; According to Jigyeon Kim, the earliest Buddhist scripture addressing the problem of evil is found in the *Dharmapāda*, the Sanskrit precursor to the *Faju jing*. See Jigyeon Kim, “악에 대한 불교적 이해 [The Buddhist Understanding of Evil],” in *악이란무엇인가 [What is Evil]*, ed. The Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: 窓, 1992): 144.

pivotal to conferring practical efficacy upon Buddhist practices; without it, no practice could coherently serve as an expedient means for practitioners' progression towards Nirvāṇa. This underscores arguments that the moral and practical significance in relative good and evil is neither identical nor dismissible.²⁰¹

In a related discourse, Fink's analysis offers a compelling perspective that regards practices as expediently or “instrumentally” good.²⁰² He argues that the common interpretation of altruistic practices in Buddhism—as good primarily because they enable practitioners to accumulate karmic merits leading to ultimate awakening—is misconstrued. If their practical efficacy solely defines these practices' goodness, then their goodness would cease upon the attainment of Nirvāṇa. In contrast, Fink posits that these good practices are inherently good, leading to positive karmic consequences and merits.²⁰³ This interpretation also appears to support the previously discussed correlation between relative good and metaphysical good within tathāgatagarbha thought. The relative good is considered good not merely for its instrumental benefits but because of its inherent goodness, a quality that derives from tathāgatagarbha.

The principle of non-discrimination is a prominent idea within the Mahāyāna tradition, but it is imperative to still engage in proper discernment of the moral and practical values of dharmas and act accordingly. As previously elaborated upon in reference to the *Qixin lun*, this inclination is notably evident within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions.²⁰⁴ In these

²⁰¹ Christopher Ives also provides a similar argument. See Christopher Ives, *Zen Awakening and Society* (Macmillan Publishers, 1992): 44–45.

²⁰² Charles K. Fink, “The Cultivation of Virtue in Buddhist Ethics,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 (2013): 671.

²⁰³ Fink articulates that an action's moral goodness is contingent upon it being driven by the appropriate intention and motivation of a practitioner. See *Ibid.*, 674–676.

²⁰⁴ For instance, in the introduction of the commentary on the *Qixin lun*, Fazang describes as follows: “The wisdom of non-discrimination is precisely discerning the characteristics of dharmas. (達磨云法。即無分別智分別法相。)”

traditions, practitioners are expected to consistently engage in altruistic practices, irrespective of their attainment of Nirvāṇa. These altruistic actions inevitably involve the correct discrimination of good and evil. In this context, Wonhyo's interpretation is noteworthy; he posits that the realization of truth inherently involves a process of correctly discerning and judging the dharmas. He elaborates on this perspective in his commentary concerning the contemplative practice (觀 *vipaśyanā*) expounded in the *Qixin lun*:

What are the four kinds of *vipaśyanā*? A monk, based on samatha within his mind, thinks and judges correctly about all dharmas, contemplates them most profoundly, examines them without exception, and observes them without exception. This is called the four kinds of *vipaśyanā*.

What is called thinking and judging correctly? It is to think and judge correctly with all one's nature about the boundary that derives from pure conduct, or the boundary that derives from a good expedient, or the boundary that derives from good conduct. What is called contemplating most profoundly? It is to contemplate most profoundly with all one's nature about such boundaries. What is called examining without exception? It is to reflect without exception and understand characteristics of such boundaries by discrimination and attention acquired through conduct with wisdom. What is called observing without exception? It is to seek and scrutinize such boundaries in detail without exception.²⁰⁵

In the apex of this practice, the expression of non-discrimination paradoxically requires discrimination (分別作意), since it would be impossible to understand each of the dharmas and judge particular examples without a process of discernment based on wisdom. This paradox prompts a reevaluation of non-discrimination's meaning. Commonly, in Mahāyāna contexts,

See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0241c11-12.

²⁰⁵ “云何四種毘鉢舍那。謂有苾芻依止內心奢摩他故。於諸法中能正思擇。最極思擇。周遍尋思。周遍伺察。是名四種。云何名為能正思擇。謂於淨行所緣境界。或於善巧所緣境界。或於善行所緣。能正思擇盡所有性。云何名為最極思擇。謂即於彼所緣境界。最極思擇如所有性。云何名為周遍尋思。謂於彼所緣境界。由慧俱行。有分別作意。取彼相狀。周遍尋思云何名為周遍思察。謂即於彼境。審諦推求。周遍伺察。” Wonhyo (元曉), *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0222b18-27.

discrimination (分別) would be understood as encompassing a certain mental attitude, or more specifically obsession (取, *upādāna*) such as greed or anger, toward dharmas in response to cognitive discernment.²⁰⁶ Hence, non-discrimination might be seen as properly perceiving and discerning dharmas, including their good and evil, without obsession.²⁰⁷ Given that *upādāna* implies 'affliction,' this understanding of non-discrimination means not being overwhelmed by the afflictions arising from discrimination. For instance, a practitioner may discern and prioritize good over evil from a non-discriminative viewpoint, but without attachment, recognizing the ontological emptiness of dharmas and their eventual cessation. In this sense, he remains unbound by the relativities of good and evil.²⁰⁸ This perspective is in line with the traditional emphasis on non-attachment to dharmas, often stressed by Chan masters who prioritized understanding dharmas' reality over performing altruistic practices.²⁰⁹ Additionally, this interpretation resonates with the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan teachings, which consider the well-being of others as pivotal to aligning with tathāgatagarbha. Discerning either good or evil is a prerequisite when

²⁰⁶ In the *Cheng weishi lun shuji*, it is described that the transformed subject (見分) becomes obsessed (取) with the appearances of the discriminated objects (相分), thereby giving rise to various discriminations of imaginary imputation (遍計所執, *parikalpita*). See, “述曰。護法云。前所變中以所變見分名為分別。是依他性。能取於所變依他相分故。起種種遍計所執分別。此是識體所變用能分別故名分別。” Kuiji (窺基), *Cheng weishi lun shuji* (成唯識論述記), T.43.1830.0487a17-20.

²⁰⁷ Oksun An, “불교의 ‘선악불이 (善惡不二)’에 대한 이해” [An Understanding of “Non-duality of Good and Evil” of Buddhism], *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 14 (2006): 245–247.

²⁰⁸ Oksun An, “불교에서의 선악으로부터의 자유 [Freedom from Good and Evil in Buddhism],” *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 47 (2007): 65–66.

²⁰⁹ To illustrate this point, Han cites several quotations from Linji (臨濟, ?–867) and Huihai (慧海, ?–?), emphasizing the importance of proper discrimination: “答。對一切善惡悉能分別是慧。於所分別之處不起愛憎。不隨所染是定。即是定慧等用也。” Huihai (慧海), *Dunwu rudao yaomen lun* (頓悟入道要門論), X.63.1223.0020b20-22; “夫出家者，須辨得平常真正見解——辨佛、辨魔，辨真、辨偽，辨凡、辨聖……。若如是辨得，名真出家。(…) 如明眼道流，魔、佛俱打。爾若愛聖憎凡，生死海裏浮沈。” Linji (臨濟), *Linji huizhao xuangong dazongshi yulu* (臨濟慧照玄公大宗師語錄), T.47.1985.0498a24-b01; Also see Dongik Han, “선불교 논리의 정체성에 관한 연구 [A Study on the Identity of Ch’an Ethics],” *철학논구 [Philosophical Forum]* Vol. 29 (2002): 51.

engaging in such salvific endeavors.

In my view, this interpretation of non-discrimination facilitates the integration of great compassion, an important axis of Mahāyāna Buddhism, with the idea of non-discrimination.²¹⁰ As Brear notes, while final awakening (or "satori") may transcend the relativities of good and evil, it cannot be seen as inactive or static.²¹¹ Instead, a practitioner should actualize great compassion and act spontaneously upon it, discerning good and evil but without being ensnared by attachment to them.²¹² Indeed, his altruistic endeavors will be most efficacious and ideally suited to his circumstances, aligning with the sublime attributes of tathāgatagarbha. Brear's examination of altruistic practices within the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, which harmoniously amalgamates great compassion with non-discrimination, seems to demonstrate how foundational Buddhist teachings, as epitomized by the Fourfold Methods of Pacification (四攝法, *catvāri saṃgraha-vastūni*), evolved into a distinctively Mahāyāna orientation.²¹³ Regarding this point,

²¹⁰ Oksun An, "불교에서의 선악으로부터의 자유 [Freedom from Good and Evil in Buddhism]," *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 47 (2007): 55; Dongik Han, "선불교 논리의 정체성에 관한 연구 [A Study on the Identity of Ch'an Ethics]," *철학논구 [Philosophical Forum]* Vol. 29 (2002): 56.

²¹¹ A. D. Brear, "The Nature and Status of Moral Behavior in Zen Buddhist Tradition," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1974): 432.

²¹² Pertaining to this matter, Oksun An posits that an enlightened individual can execute virtuous actions without undergoing the deliberative process of discerning what is appropriate or good within a specific context. This is premised on the understanding that such an individual has already comprehended the intrinsic nature of relative good and evil, and acts from an alignment with the perfection of Suchness. See Oksun An, "불교의 '선악불이 (善惡不二)'에 대한 이해" [An Understanding of "Non-duality of Good and Evil" of Buddhism], *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 14 (2006): 249.

²¹³ The Fourfold Methods of Pacification (四攝法, *catvāri saṃgraha-vastūni*) are four essential principles in Buddhism aimed at attracting and guiding sentient beings toward enlightenment. These methods are: giving (布施, *dāna*), which involves generosity of material goods, teachings, and protection; kind speech (愛語, *priyavacana*), which refers to gentle and truthful communication that fosters trust and encouragement; beneficial action (利行, *arthacaryā*), which entails acting to benefit others and support their well-being and spiritual growth; and cooperation (同事, *samānārthatā*), which means working together and sharing experiences to build solidarity and understanding.

the *Qixin lun* posits that the functions (用) rooted in the purity of tathāgatagarbha prompt sentient beings to invoke the Fourfold Methods of Pacification and cultivate great compassion, reaping significant benefits in the process.²¹⁴

The discrimination between good and evil (or not-good 不善) is, in fact, a concept emphasized even in early Buddhist scriptures like the *Āgama*, before the emergence of the Mahāyāna tradition.²¹⁵ However, the distinctive feature of the discrimination between good and evil in the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions is that it shares the a priori nature of tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature. Shenhui (神會, 670-762), a disciple of the Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng (慧[惠]能, 638-713), elucidates the relationship between tathāgatagarbha, wisdom, and non-discrimination more clearly. He says:

Non-abiding (無住) equates to quiescence (寂靜), and the foundation (體) of quiescence is called 'stillness (定).' From this foundation, natural wisdom (自然智) arises, enabling one to rightly understand the foundation that is inherently still. This perception is identified as 'wisdom (慧).' The foundation is characterized by emptiness. Based on this empty foundation, cognition (知) arises, facilitating the correct discernment of worldly things like blue, yellow, red, and white. This discernment is acknowledged as 'wisdom.' If one does not follow such discrimination arising, it is called 'stillness.'²¹⁶

²¹⁴ “用熏習者，即是眾生外緣之力。如是外緣有無量義，略說二種。云何為二？一者、差別緣，二者、平等緣。差別緣者，此人依於諸佛菩薩等，從初發意始求道時乃至得佛，於中若見若念，或為眷屬父母諸親，或為給使，或為知友，或為怨家，或起四攝，乃至一切所作無量行緣，以起大悲熏習之力，能令眾生增長善根，若見若聞得利益故。”

Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0578c15-22.

²¹⁵ “又有眾生愚冥無智，不識善惡，不能如實知苦、習、盡、道，其人於後遇善知識，得聞法言，法法成就，識善不善，能如實知苦、習、盡、道，捨不善行，生歡喜心，恬然快樂，又於樂中，復生大喜。”，Buddhayaśas (佛陀耶舍), trans., *Chang ahan jing* (長阿含經), T.01.0001.0036b10-14.

²¹⁶ “「無住是寂靜。寂靜體即名為定。從體上有自然智，能知本寂靜體，名為慧。」... 「本體空寂。從空寂體上起知，

According to Shenhui, then, fundamental cognitive activity arises from the emptiness of tathāgatagarbha, and when this cognitive activity correctly discriminates dharmas, it is termed wisdom. The term "Stillness" refers to the non-abiding nature of arisen discrimination, yet this does not imply that the discrimination grounded in wisdom is false or vain. Wisdom is rooted in tathāgatagarbha itself, and only a correct understanding of dharmas is represented by wisdom. Therefore, the understanding of good and evil obtained through correct discrimination cannot be considered mere empirical knowledge. Given that wisdom emerges from the inherent attributes of tathāgatagarbha and possesses an *a priori* function, the discrimination of good and evil grounded in this wisdom cannot be empirically or conditionally constituted.²¹⁷ Such an interpretation of the discrimination between good and evil aligns with the core propositions of the Tathāgatagarbha teaching, which refutes an empirical approach (見聞覺知) to comprehending tathāgatagarbha. In this light, the discrimination between good and evil can be deemed an *a priori* discrimination (or cognition). Therefore, there is no need to presuppose the discrimination between the subject and object of dharmas as a preliminary step to achieving this function of discernment between good and evil. This discernment, rooted in tathāgatagarbha, is inherently self-evident and does not rely on external conditions. This is aptly characterized as the "great

善分別世間青黃赤白，是慧。不隨分別起，是定。」” Hushi (胡适), ed., *Xin xiaodingde Dunhuang xieben Shenhui heshang yizhu liangzhong* (新校定的敦煌寫本神會和尚遺著兩種), B.25.0142.0019a07-0021a06.

²¹⁷ In relation to this point, Zongmi elucidates that the function (用) of Suchness is indicative of the profound wisdom embodied in expedient means. He characterizes it as endowed with ‘inherent (自然) and inconceivable (不思議)’ karmic functions (業用), enabling sentient beings to derive benefits according to what they see and hear. See “真如用者，諸佛本在因地，行六波羅蜜，攝化衆生，大方便智，除滅無明，見本法身，自然而有不思議業用，遍一切處，隨其衆生見聞得益。” Zongmi, *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* (禪源諸詮集都序), T.48.2015.0412a12. (in diagram)

brilliance of wisdom (大智慧光明)" in the *Qixin lun*.²¹⁸

In summary, interpreting the wisdom of non-discrimination in traditions such as Tathāgatagarbha, there is no need to depend on an empirical approach that is based on the discrimination between subject and object in order to attain this pure wisdom. Instead, it can be understood as an expression that points to an inherent ability to discriminate between dharmas including good and evil, which originates from the innate attributes of tathāgatagarbha. Wisdom so understood can discriminate between good and evil without being constituted through experiences. Therefore, non-discriminating wisdom *invariably* involves discernment; and this discernment is *always* correct.²¹⁹ With tathāgatagarbha at its core, the interrelated ideas of wisdom, compassion, and altruistic practices preclude any possibility of conditional situations, such as misjudgments of good and evil or insufficient practices of compassion, from the altruistic endeavors.

From the perspective of tathāgatagarbha, the transcendentalist interpretation offers a restricted understanding of the gist of Mahāyāna teachings and the intertwined ethical

²¹⁸ “從本已來，性自滿足一切功德。所謂自體有大智慧光明義故，遍照法界義故，真實識知義故，自性清淨心義故，常樂我淨義故，清涼不變自在義故。具足如是過於恒沙不離、不斷、不異、不思議佛法，乃至滿足無有所少義故，名為如來藏，亦名如來法身。” Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴), *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦), T.32.1666.0579a14-20.

²¹⁹ This interpretation presupposes a difference between the relative discrimination of dharmas and discrimination as non-discrimination. In relation to these two types of discrimination, Yasui Kōsai (安井 廣濟) describes it as follows: “The emptiness, which signifies the negation of relative discrimination, is realized by an absolute wisdom devoid of discrimination, transcending subject and object. ... When all discrimination ceases, disputes are extinguished, and in the silence, one attains and realizes the ineffable emptiness (*Śūnyatā*); this is truly Paramārtha that Mahayana Buddhism teaches.” In this description, Yasui acknowledges the intuitive cognitive operation in a state of non-discrimination and clearly differentiates it from relative discrimination. Such an interpretation implicitly suggests that what should be aimed for through practice is not the 'absolute non-discrimination' that denies all forms of discrimination, but a form of non-discrimination that only quells the discrimination of 'empty' dharmas based on subject and object. See Yasui Kōsai, *中觀思想研究* [Study on Madhyamaka Philosophy], trans. Seonghwan Kim (Published by Munhak Saenghwalsa, 1988): 195-196.

considerations. This constriction, evident in their skeptical contentions, necessitates a re-evaluation of the nexus between Mahāyāna Buddhism and ethics. When one delves into the intricacies of this relationship, it is essential to highlight the foundational ethos of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which catalyzed this unique Buddhist trajectory. Noteworthy figures within Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, are not mere contemplatives; they do not seek liberation from Saṃsāra for themselves alone, nor do they neglect other sentient beings in distress. Driven by profound compassion that stems from their immanent tathāgatagarbha, they ardently strive to alleviate the suffering of sentient beings. While the source of morality is attributed to this tathāgatagarbha, the actualization of good in Mahāyāna Buddhism—including the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions—remains embedded in the experiential domain of sentient beings. Consequently, Mahāyāna teachings inherently encompass considerations on morality, facilitating an ethical exploration of its core philosophy. To summarize, the discourse on Buddhist ethics within Mahāyāna Buddhism is both pertinent and feasible even in relation to its core. This is epitomized in the teaching advised by the seven Buddhas (七佛通戒), which emphasize: “Purification of one's mind is achieved by abstaining from all malevolent actions and diligently practicing all kinds of benevolent deeds.”²²⁰

²²⁰ Dharmatrāta (法救), *Faju jing* (法句經), “諸惡莫作, 諸善奉行, 自淨其意, 是諸佛教.” translated into Chinese by Vighna (維祇難), T.04.0210.0567b01-02.

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T = 大正新修大藏經

X = 續藏經

B = 大藏經補編選錄

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Chapter 3: Confronting Profound Dilemmas of the Self and Morality in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan Ethics

3.1 Introduction

Philosophical discussions surrounding the self and subjectivity are among the oldest topics in both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. These debates are also indispensable in the field of modern Buddhist ethics. However, post-Enlightenment philosophical discussions about the self have mostly developed within Western traditions; contemporary Buddhist ethical discussions on the issue of the self seem relatively under-developed. Yet, since Nirvāṇa, the fundamental goal of the Buddhist tradition, is tied to clarifying the identity of the self, elucidating the concept of the self is inevitably a core theme permeating the long tradition of Buddhism.

The most fundamental meaning of the concept of 'self' might be 'who am I.' In the post-Enlightenment reevaluation of the self, a pivotal theme has been the 'persistence question' – what determines that subjects occupying different times and spaces are the same person. Early Buddhist tradition encompasses the implications of this persistence question through the concept of the Five Aggregates (五蘊, *Pañcaskandha*). The understanding of the self in early Buddhism, based on this concept, considers all components constituting the self as impermanent, thus denying permanence and immutability of the self. Like the famous chariot analogy in the *Milindapañha* (那先比丘經), a human being is seen as a conditional amalgamation of physical elements like bones and flesh and mental factors, implying that there is no separate existence that

can be distinctly called a 'human.'

A prominent characteristic of the understanding of the self in early Buddhism is that the ontological understanding of the self remains within the realm of the empirical self. The aspects related to the universal concept of the self, such as the *a priori* conditions of the self or diachronic personal identity, are either not actively explored or intentionally set aside. Instead, in early Buddhism, since the components constituting the self are considered empty, the experiences derived from such a self and the external objects of those experiences are also seen as empty. This leads to the argument that 'the world is empty.' Based on such an interpretation of the self, in early Buddhism, suffering is understood to arise from the discrepancy caused by perceiving the impermanent self and the world experienced by it as permanent and developing attachment to them. This understanding of suffering is later adopted by most Buddhist traditions, forming one of the fundamental teachings. However, when the correct understanding of non-self (*anātman*) is presented as a solution to alleviate this suffering, it implicitly suggests that early Buddhism assumes an 'immutable inner agent of continuity of experience.' This is because, for the legitimacy of the practice to be persuasive, the one who suffers and the one who overcomes suffering through practice must be considered the same individual. Although such a continuously existing self is regarded as an unattainable illusion and its existence is denied, it can be inferred that this concept of the self is not entirely disregarded in the early Buddhist philosophy.

The coexistence of the concepts of empirical self and non-self in early Buddhism leads inevitably to the problem of personal identity when examined philosophically. The issue of personal identity in the Buddhist tradition is raised in relation to the key concepts of dependent origination (緣起) and reincarnation (輪迴). These two notions imply that the causes created by an individual necessarily produce congruent results, and the continuity of such karmic relationship

extends from one life to the next. This entails that the individual who generates karmic influence and receives its results must be considered the same person, even across multiple lives. Such an implication might have seemed logically incompatible with the notion of non-self consistently presented from the early tradition. Hence, the tension between the concepts of the self and non-self became a significant philosophical issue by the time of the early Buddhist schools, or Nikāya Buddhism (部派佛教). Nevertheless, even after the emergence of the Tathāgatagarbha thought in the Mahāyāna tradition, the concept of non-self was undoubtedly the predominant view accepted in the historical flow of Buddhist tradition.

The methodologies used in the Indian Buddhist tradition to interpret this philosophical tension were the theory of Two Truths (二諦, *dvasatya*), the ultimate truth (真諦, *Paramārthasatya*) and conventional truth (俗諦, *Samvṛti-satya*), and the Middle Way (中道) approach. In these, the concept of non-self is considered the ultimate truth, while the view of the self as a psycho-physical composite is seen as the conventional truth. A balanced interpretation between these two is regarded as the correct method for conveying the truth and achieving enlightenment. This is precisely what the Middle Way approach indicates. As a solution to the philosophical challenges surrounding the concept of the self, the characteristics of the theory of two truths and the Middle Way can be summarized as follows: 1. The concept of the self explored in the Indian Buddhist tradition is strictly limited to the empirical self, manifested as phenomena. 2. The theory of two truths and the Middle Way primarily focus on their practical application in the pursuit of final awakening.

The clarification of the problem of personal identity through the two truths theory and the Middle Way approach is currently recognized as a valid strategy known as 'mereological

reductionism' by some contemporary scholars. According to them, the self is considered no more than a collection of preceding and constituting conditions, thus not assigned any identity. The essence of this view of the self is to perceive experience itself as the basis for the existence of the self. In other words, the self is merely a collection or by-product of experiences, and this perspective is clearly described in early texts such as the *Dhammapada*. However, despite such explanations based on the Indian Buddhist teachings, some contemporary scholars like Yasuaki Nara (奈良 康明) express dissatisfaction with the uneasy harmony between the theories of non-self and reincarnation. According to their criticism, karma and reincarnation are essential elements in the practice and attainment of Nirvāṇa and inevitably require a consistent notion of the self. They argue that the conventional tradition of translating Pāli 'an-attan' as 'non-self (無我)' is a significant misunderstanding of early Buddhism's view of the self. They suggest that 'an-attan' should be translated as 'not-self (非我)' instead, leaving room for the assumption of a 'true self.' Although this challenge of 'not-self' theory has textual basis, the mainstream interpretation of early Buddhism's view of the self today adopts the theory of non-self. The development of the discourse on the notion of the self in early Buddhism shows that the concept of the self is a crucial idea associated with Buddhist epistemology, ontology, and soteriology, and it entails as many complex philosophical issues as it does comprehensiveness. These complex problems have led to the emergence of new notion of the self that supplements the existing concept of the self.

Efforts to bridge the gap between the theories of non-self and karma and reincarnation led to the emergence of Tathāgatagarbha thought through the early Mahāyāna traditions. The Sanskrit term tathāgatagarbha generally represents the idea of an embryo containing the potential for Buddhahood. This tradition of thought lacks a well-known Indian philosopher advocate,

especially in comparison to Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, who respectively contributed to the establishment of the Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions. Furthermore, the authorship of some Tathāgatagarbha scriptures is often questioned, rendering the tracing of its origins a relatively difficult task. The interpretation generally accepted is that the emergence of Tathāgatagarbha thought should be viewed as belonging to the second phase of Mahāyāna Buddhism, following the Prajñāpāramitā-centered first phase of Mahāyāna scriptures. Most Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises were translated into Chinese between the 4th and 6th centuries and quickly became central to Chinese Buddhism. Tathāgatagarbha thought was significantly integrated into major Chinese Buddhist traditions such as Tiantai, Huayan, and Zen, making it an important aspect of studying Chinese Buddhism even today.

The early Tathāgatagarbha thought, as evident in scriptures like the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (如來藏經) and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (大般涅槃經), is characterized by the emphasis on Tathāgatagarbha as a 'treasure trove.' Similar to a pot of pure gold hidden in the front yard, the pure Tathāgatagarbha, as the potentiality for awakening, is said to be inherent in all beings. In terms of practice, this characteristic of Tathāgatagarbha thought leads to the propositions that 'all beings inherently possess the potential to navigate to the final awakening,' and 'such potential is merely obscured by delusions and not yet realized.' Later on, Tathāgatagarbha thought incorporated the epistemology of Yogācāra and evolved into a theory of dependent origination based on tathāgatagarbha, or Suchness (眞如). In this theory, it is posited that Tathāgatagarbha is the source of the excellent merits of Nirvāṇa and that it also forms the basis upon which phenomena are constituted. This form of thought reaches its completion in the *Dasheng Qixin lun* (大乘起信論, hereafter *Qixin lun*).

The emergence of the Tathāgatagarbha concept, which can embody the subjectivity of the practitioner, has led to the recentering of the notion of the self, traditionally regarded as impermanent, by granting it a completely opposite status. Notable scriptures in the Tathāgatagarbha literature that depict the concept of the self in a positive light are the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (究竟一乘寶性論), where the self is defined as synonymous with Tathāgatagarbha and the ultimate nature of all sentient beings. That is, the self as permanent and unchanging, previously negated, is transformed into the *paramārtha-satya*, the highest truth. However, this shift in understanding the concept of the self does not entirely negate the traditional interpretation of the self. Tathāgatagarbha scriptures still accept the impermanence of the empirical self, understood as composed of the five aggregates through expressions like 'the self of sentient beings'. Simultaneously, they posit the self as the Tathāgata (如來) dwelling within beings, explicitly naming it the 'true self (真我).' Furthermore, in scriptures such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, using Gautama's words, the concept of the true self is explained as 'both self (有我) and no-self (無我).' It is further clarified that self and no-self are not dual, integrating the concept of true self with the traditional notion of no-self. Sometime the conventional no-self view is relegated to an expedient means, positioning the true self at the center of practice.

From the explanations of the scriptures of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition concerning the concept of the self, we can derive that there is an emerging differentiation in the notion of the self, which was not found previously. This differentiation of the self distinguishes between the 'conventional self' (假我), the foundation of the traditional doctrine of non-self, and the 'true self' found in Tathāgatagarbha and Buddha-nature. Unlike the conventional self, this 'true self' is unchanging and eternal, forming the basis of Nirvāṇa and the ultimate goal of practice. This

concept of the true self is depicted with positive characteristics such as the Four Virtues of noble truth (四德), as well as goodness (善), omnipresence (遍在), and truthfulness in Tathāgatagarbha literature. Pointing out this differentiation of the self is not a new argument. Several modern Buddhist scholars like Yoshifumi Ueda and Kurethara Bose have already noted these two conceptions of the self as characteristic of the Mahāyāna tradition. However, their definitions of the Mahāyāna conceptions of the self do not carry the same implications. In this chapter, the self, which is denied in the traditional teaching of non-self, is termed the 'empirical self,' due to its constitution through the five aggregates and subjective experience. In contrast, tathāgatagarbha as the true self, not manifest in phenomena and only conceptualized through philosophical reasoning, is referred to as the 'philosophical self.'

After Descartes declared 'I think, therefore I am,' the issue of the subject as the basis for cognition and existence became a central theme in modern Western philosophy. This paper partially utilizes Kant's discussion on the self and subject to elucidate the characteristics of the philosophical self in Tathāgatagarbha thought. According to Kant, primary self-awareness is only possible through experiences with external objects. This empirical self, as it is understood and comprehended, fundamentally depends on its contingent conditions. Kant's inquiry goes further, asking: What underlies the inner sense and external experiences of the subject? According to Kant, this is the 'transcendental unity of apperception,' a foundational activity of reflective self-consciousness necessary for the synthesis and unity of cognition. It is, in essence, the original self-consciousness that makes the representation of 'I' possible. However, this reflective self is not an object of experience and, in Kant's terms, is a 'wholly empty representation I.' This understanding is akin to the Tathāgatagarbha tradition's reference to Buddha-nature as 'emptiness,' based on its ineffability or imperceptibility. Here, we can identify a bifurcation of the

concept of emptiness in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The first is emptiness as the impermanence of phenomenal existence, used to denote the empirical self. The second emptiness refers to Tathāgatagarbha, indicating its non-manifestation in phenomena and thus its inexperienceability. Thus, the differentiation in the concept of the self in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition was accompanied by a division in the concept of emptiness, allowing both conceptions of the self in the tradition to be termed as 'empty.' This bifurcation of emptiness led to confusion among subsequent scholars regarding the concept of the self in Tathāgatagarbha thought.

Another notable development in later Tathāgatagarbha thought is the evolution of the concept of non-emptiness (不空) of tathāgatagarbha as *a priori* basis for cognition and existence. While early Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises explained Buddha-nature's non-emptiness primarily as the foundation of pure virtues and awakening, they did not clearly elucidate the meaning and function of these virtues and how they are mediated in awakening. However, the later treatise *Qixin lun*, influenced by the Yogācāra school, expanded this understanding by adopting the 'one mind' theory, thus extending the implications of tathāgatagarbha's virtues in ontological and epistemological terms. This is evident in the explanations of the 'greatness of attributes (相大)' in the *Qixin lun*, representing the metaphysical basis of suchness and its pure attributes, prominently including the function of profound wisdom (大智慧光明). The function of wisdom in this treatise is characterized by the cessation of mental discrimination (止) and insight into the true reality of phenomena (觀), focusing not on specific entities but on the truth that phenomena are constituted by the contaminated experiences of the mind. Thus, this consciousness is preeminent and reflective, a necessary postulate for achieving ultimate truth in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. In summary, the concept of tathāgatagarbha in the *Qixin lun* is

depicted as the foundation for both types of cognitive activities. It serves as the basis for all empirically consciousness activities and the reflective self-consciousness activities concerning the constitutive relationships of empirical consciousness with phenomena. In other words, Tathāgatagarbha is the basis of both the self and all entities in the world, as well as the basis of final awakening.

The moral implications accompanying the concept of the 'true self' in Tathāgatagarbha thought, and their theoretical relevance to other traditional teachings, as well as their functionality in practice, seem to be insufficiently explored in existing studies. When compared to traditional Buddhist understanding of the self, the concept of the true self in Tathāgatagarbha thought exhibits several philosophical characteristics. Firstly, the establishment of the concept of the true self presents a unique solution to the issue of self-continuity. In Buddhism, as was pointed out above, for the relationship between practice and the achievement of awakening to be rationally accepted, the practitioner and the recipient of the fruits at different times must be regarded as the same individual. One philosophical difficulty faced by traditional understandings of the self is that the person is understood only as a variable, insubstantial being. In the Tathāgatagarbha thought as presented in the *Qixin lun*, the concept of Suchness is employed to posit an immutable subjectivity. At the same time, by adopting the notion of the Suchness's adaptation to conditions (隨緣), it reconciles the subject of experience with this true subjectivity.

Another philosophical characteristic of Tathāgatagarbha thought involves the metaphysical attributes tied to Tathāgatagarbha and their inherent connection with the practice of altruism (利他). In the *Qixin lun*, it is emphasized that practitioners who understand the truth of phenomena's reality should naturally cultivate compassion and make vows to aid others.

Typically in Buddhist tradition, emotional elements, whether positive or negative, are seen as conditional and transient, and thus are to be ceased through practice. However, the *Qixin lun* considers emotional elements such as compassion and the will to help others, constitutive of the realization of true reality of phenomena, as essential and inevitable in contemplative practice. This unconditional connection between suchness and emotional elements is explained based on the infinite virtues and wisdom inherent in Suchness as non-emptiness (不空), as detailed in various Tathāgatagarbha scriptures, including the *Qixin lun*. The *a priori* nature of Suchness's attributes becomes clearer in the explanation of the 'greatness of attributes,' in which attributes it to the ground (體) of Suchness in the *Qixin lun*. From a general perspective, the *metaphysicalization* of these notions seems inevitable in the Tathāgatagarbha thought, as ultimate awakening cannot stem from anything conditional. Conditional elements imply the perpetuation of karma, linking more with Saṃsāra than Nirvāṇa. Moreover, conditional elements, being transient events in space and time, cannot serve as inevitable causes in a causal chain.

Therefore, when aiming to construct a foundation for Buddhist ethics, it is fundamentally necessary to postulate principles that are independent of contingent conditions, namely *a priori* causes and the principles that can necessarily be derived from them. These principles should transcend the individuality of sentient beings, allowing the integration of moral judgment processes based on individual experiences into a 'universal' context. The Tathāgatagarbha tradition, which upholds the concept of Suchness that includes ground, attributes, and function (三大), encompasses all these ethical demands. Furthermore, an ethical advantage of the Tathāgatagarbha concept of the true self is its incorporation of practical ways of helping others as an essential element of its moral principles. The theoretical background

enabling this extensive form of practice is fundamentally the concept of great compassion (大悲心, *Mahā-karuṇā*), activated by the belief (信) in Suchness, and the Pāramitā (波羅蜜) practices necessary to achieve such belief. According to the explanation in the *Qixin lun*, the way of saving sentient beings through the practice of generosity Pāramitā (布施, *dāna*) does not remain merely conceptual but demands actively alleviating the actual sufferings of beings, such as from disasters and threats.

In the analysis of the ethical theories surrounding the concept of Tathāgatagarbha in Tathāgatagarbha thought, a pertinent question quickly arises: How can the virtues inherent in tathāgatagarbha, which, due to its ineffable status, are beyond conceptual thought and linguistic expression, manifest through the practitioner's mind into phenomena? In response to this query, the *Qixin lun* presents a reinterpreted concept of the Three Categories of Greatness (三大), which modifies the traditional dichotomic structure of Ground (*ti* 體) and Functions (*yong* 用). The newly added concept of Attributes (*xiang* 相) serves to causally link the metaphysical foundation (Ground) with its phenomenological manifestation (Functions), additionally positing the idea of Function as inherently part of One Mind from the outset. The concept of Attributes, holding an ontological status equivalent to Ground, carries significant ethical implications. It establishes ontological continuity, allowing the virtues and purity inherent in Tathāgatagarbha to be transmitted into its manifestations. This implies that the moral attributes and the intrinsic purity of Tathāgatagarbha are not only retained within the metaphysical realm but are also extended ontologically into their tangible manifestations. The *Qixin lun* elucidates this through the concepts of ‘purification based on Tathāgatagarbha (淨法薰習).’ According to this theory, the

inner purity of Tathāgatagarbha engenders functions based on this purity, serving both as an inner cause and external conditions. Consequently, sentient beings naturally become weary of the suffering of life and death and are inclined towards seeking Nirvāṇa. The theoretical framework of purification based on Tathāgatagarbha as proposed by the *Qixin lun* demonstrates that the accomplishment of morality within Tathāgatagarbha thought is, in some senses, inevitable.

In the analysis above, the philosophical implications of Tathāgatagarbha thought were notably incorporated and evolved into a distinct theoretical form within the Huayan tradition. A detailed examination of this intellectual transference reveals that Tathāgatagarbha thought and the theories of consciousness in the Dilun School (地論宗) and Shelun School (攝論宗) significantly influenced the establishment of the Huayan philosophy. This influence is widely accepted in existing studies on the Huayan tradition's prehistory. A key issue within the Dilun School, particularly its interpretation of Ālaya-vijñāna (阿賴耶識), led to the school's division into Southern and Northern branches. The Southern branch, which included figures such as Huiguang (慧光, 468-537) and Fashang (法上, 495-580) who followed Ratnamati's (勒那摩提) interpretations, was influenced by the four-volume *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (楞伽經). They proposed, within their interpretation of the eight consciousnesses theory, that Ālaya-vijñāna is inherently pure. Conversely, the Shelun School, epitomized by Paramārtha (真諦) who translated the *Qixin lun*, viewed Ālaya-vijñāna as possessing an aspect of ignorance. Thus, they introduced a ninth consciousness, Amala-vijñāna (阿摩羅識), considered to be always pure. In this theoretical framework, ceasing Ālaya-vijñāna through practice equated to removing afflictions (煩惱), leading to the realization of Amala-vijñāna.

The Tathāgatagarbha thought, as developed under Paramārtha and his disciples in the Shelun School, was subsequently embraced by Huiyuan (慧遠, 523-592), a prominent figure of the Southern branch of the Dilun School. Huiyuan is renowned for authoring one of the three major commentaries of the *Qixin lun*, *Dasheng qixin lun yishu* (大乘起信論義疏). Notably, in formulating his theories of consciousness, Huiyuan showed a substantial reliance on Tathāgatagarbha teachings rather than the Yogācāra teachings of Xuanzang. This intellectual transformation within the Southern branch of Dilun School found a direct connection with Zhiyan (智儼, 602-668), the second patriarch of the Huayan School, who is credited with laying the foundations of Huayan philosophy. According to Zhiyan's biography, after being ordained by Dushun (杜順, 557-640), Zhiyan studied Huiguang's Huayan teachings at the Zhixiang Temple (至相寺), a key center for the Southern Dilun School. Consequently, some scholars include Zhiyan within the lineage of the Southern branch of the Dilun School, inherited from Huiguang. This lineage connection helps clarify the philosophical relationship between the Dilun and Huayan traditions.

For the masters of the Huayan tradition, the *Huayan jing* (華嚴經, *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*), encompassing a vast array of Buddhist teachings, was of paramount importance. However, in interpreting the *Huayan jing* and in the philosophical development of their Huayan thought, they significantly relied on the *Qixin lun*. The extent of their emphasis on the *Qixin lun* is evident in their classification of Buddha's teachings, known as the 'Classification of the Teachings' (*jiaoxiang panshi* 教相判釋, hereafter *panjiao* 判教). For example, Fazang (法藏, 643-713), the third patriarch of Huayan, placed the Tathāgatagarbha teachings at the highest position in his

classification of Four Teachings (四教), compared to other Mahāyāna traditions. While the objectivity of this classification is problematic, it underscores the profound importance the *Qixin lun*'s consciousness theory, inherited through the Shelun and Dilun Schools, held for the Huayan masters. The concept of Tathāgatagarbha as an internal basis for awakening and altruistic practice in Huayan patriarchs' thought evolved into unique practice theories, such as Chengguan's (澄觀, 738-839) 'Integration of the Three Holy Ones (三聖圓融).'

The introduction of Tathāgatagarbha thought through the *Qixin lun* into the Huayan tradition opened new horizons for an ethical reinterpretation of the existing Tathāgatagarbha tradition. However, Tathāgatagarbha thought, despite encompassing these philosophical characteristics, also presented several significant challenges. This chapter's final section will briefly examine some of these philosophical difficulties that emerged in the debates surrounding Tathāgatagarbha thought. These challenges can be summarized as follows: 1) The problem of Suchness's adaptation to conditions. 2) The ontological relationship between Suchness and fundamental ignorance (根本無明), and the interpretation of the futility of practice. 3) Criticisms of similarities with Brahmanic thought and the Critical Buddhism (批判仏教, Japanese: *hihan bukkyō*). 4) The expedient means (方便, *upāya*) argument of Tathāgatagarbha. The philosophical challenges that followed Tathāgatagarbha thought, despite extensive debates and counterarguments, remain partially unresolved. This also exemplifies why ethical research based on Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions has been relatively underdeveloped.

3.2 The Fundamental Explanation of the Self in Buddhism: The Empirical Self

The issues surrounding notions such as self, personhood, personal identity, and subjectivity are among the oldest and most persistently recurring themes in both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. In the Western philosophical world, particularly since the modern era, philosophical issues regarding these concepts have received a lot of attention, with some contemporary philosophers asserting that the problems of the self and subjectivity were central to modern philosophy.²²¹ Since Descartes' methodical skepticism, which prompted a reconsideration of the problem of personal identity and existence, philosophers such as Locke, Hume, Kant, Husserl, and Wittgenstein have expanded the philosophical issues of the self to include matters of *a priori* knowledge and subjectivity. These issues of the self remain relevant in contemporary philosophical research too, including the field of Buddhist ethics. However, as Sally King points out, these philosophical issues related to individuality originated in post-Enlightenment Western philosophy and were not directly addressed in the practical discussions of the self within the Buddhist tradition. Therefore, although Buddhist philosophy includes significant contemplation on the conditions of the self and personhood, it may not readily provide satisfactory answers to questions posed in contemporary Western philosophical discourse, such as “what is a person?”²²²

Although the issues surrounding personal identity, the *a priori* nature of the self, and subjectivity may not be indigenous to Buddhist tradition, several contemporary Buddhist scholars are already attempting to analyze the characteristics of Buddhist tradition through the

²²¹ Nakrim Chung, “데카르트와 칸트의 주체개념 (The Concepts of Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant),” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 44 (2006): 432.

²²² Sallie B. King, “Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person,” *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 151.

lens of such issues. Consequently, today's Buddhist research has reached a situation where it can no longer ignore these philosophical issues. This situation presents a valuable opportunity to re-examine the problems surrounding the self in Buddhism and to characterize philosophically the ways in which the self is understood in Buddhism. Indeed, the issue of the self has always been central to Buddhism. It has been a key focus from Buddhism's inception to the present, whether explicitly mentioned or implicitly assumed. This focus is because Buddhism's fundamental ideal, liberation from suffering (Nirvāṇa) starts from defining the subject's identity, namely, the self.²²³ The concept of the self, which emerged with the establishment of early Buddhism,²²⁴ has been conceptualized with various terms such as *Wo* (我), true self (眞我), original face (本來面目), and protagonist (主人公), extending into the Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. This shows how important the issue of the self has been in the transmission of Buddhist teachings and the succession of practice traditions. Therefore, from these concepts, perhaps we can expect responses from Buddhism to Western philosophical issues surrounding the concept of the self. And maybe it will be an opportunity to discover philosophical characteristics that connect with the notion of the self in the Buddhist tradition and integrate them into a systematized Buddhist ethics.

The concept of the self, undoubtedly carrying a complex meaning, can be fundamentally understood, both in everyday and philosophical contexts, as addressing the question “who am I?”

²²³ Boram Park, “나를 바라보는 두 시각, 여래출현과 여래장 [Two Perspectives on ‘I’: the Manifestation of the Tathāgata and Tathāgatagarbha],” *Critical Review for Buddhist Studies* 10 (2011): 95.

²²⁴ In this dissertation, the term “early Buddhism” is used in accordance with its general definition. Here, early Buddhism is synonymous with pre-sectarian Buddhism, encompassing the period up to the Second Buddhist Council (結集, circa 383 BC), which was marked by the separation into different schools due to differing interpretations of monastic discipline among the Buddhist communities following the Buddha's death. Therefore, the traditions of Abhidharma or the early Buddhist schools (部派佛教) that emerged after this period are not included in this context.

In post-Enlightenment Western philosophy, as well as among Buddhist scholars, one of the most crucial topics in the philosophical discourse about what constitutes the self is, as noted above, the *Persistence question*. This question essentially concerns what determines that a person, who exists in different spatiotemporal dimensions and possessing synchronic and diachronic unity (i.e., connecting the past and future), is not two different individuals but the same one person.²²⁵ This Persistence question is reflected in various existing definitions of the concept self. For instance, Locke defines the concept of a person as: “A thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.”²²⁶ Such definitions of the self imply two significant implications for philosophical contemplation: 1) The self is composed of ‘empirical properties’ that enable one to perceive and sense oneself. These properties, as experiential elements manifesting phenomenally, are undeniably conditional and therefore cannot be repetitive. Thus, they may well be accepted as elements that define oneself as a person and distinguish one from others. 2) When referring to the self as the empirical perceiver of seeing, hearing, etc., this experience encompasses not only the internal characteristics of the self but also external elements. This implies that experiencing the self means reflecting on ‘oneself placed within a specific time and space.’ Therefore, whether considered in everyday life or philosophically, the self must be contemplated in conjunction with the world it experiences, i.e., the ‘external elements’ of the self.

²²⁵ According to Rudd, in studying the concept of the self, treating synchronic and diachronic selves as separate issues is "deeply misleading." He argues that the self, as philosophically contemplated, necessarily implies a "continuing life of the self across time" within "a wider temporal context." Consequently, this abstract self is both synchronic and diachronic. See Anthony Rudd, "No Self? Some Reflections on Buddhist Theories of Personal Identity," *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 3 (2015): 875.

²²⁶ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 335.

3.2.1 The Characteristics of the Notion of the Self in Early Buddhist Tradition

From the outset of early Buddhism, the basic Buddhist notion of the self encompasses the two implications of the Persistence question. As Gethin notes, the expressions we use in everyday language to refer to ourselves, such as ‘I,’ are essentially presupposing the concept of an unchanging personal identity or selfhood that links experiences across different times and spaces. Early Buddhism problematized this notion of an unchanging or enduring self-entity,²²⁷ which raises the question: What are the constitutive elements of the empirical self in a Buddhist context? And: What is the attitude of early Buddhist teachings towards these elements? To answer these questions, the concept of the Five Aggregates, central from early Buddhism to the East Asian Mahāyāna tradition, comes into play. In the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (無我相經), the early Buddhist text which includes the Buddha's second sermon, the notions of the self and the Five Aggregates are described as follows:

“Monks, what do you think? Is form (Pali: *rūpa*) permanent (Pali: *niccaṃ*) or impermanent (Pali: *aniccaṃ*)?”

Venerable sir, it is impermanent.

That which is impermanent, is it suffering or happiness?

Venerable sir, it is suffering.

That which is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, is it appropriate to regard it as ‘This is mine (Pali: *mama*), this I am (Pali: *aham*), this is my self (Pali: *me attā*)?’

Venerable sir, it is not.”²²⁸

²²⁷ Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 135.

²²⁸ “*Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā`ti? Aniccaṃ bhante. Yaṃ paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukhaṃ vā`ti? Dukkhaṃ bhante. Yaṃ paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ, kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassituṃ ‘Etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā`ti? No hetuṃ, bhante.’*” The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, *A Discourse on the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*, trans. Min Kyaw Thu, ed. Bhikkhu Pesala (The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 2021), 86; In referencing the translation of the passage cited above, the following paper was also consulted. Sooyoung Nam, “초기 불교의 중도 개념 재검토 [A Re-examination of the Middle-way Conception in Early Buddhism],” *남아시아연구* [Journal of South Asian Studies] 21 (2015): 70.

(The above quote is an explanation of form, one of the Five Aggregates. The rest of the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* follows a similar pattern of dialogue for the other components of the Five Aggregates: feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.)

The Pali term *anicca*, signifying impermanence (無常, *anitya*), implies a negation (*a*) of something that is eternal and unchanging (*nicca*).²²⁹ In Buddhist tradition, the Five Aggregates, consisting of form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness (色受想行識), are considered to be the elements that constitute an individual's physical and mental existence.²³⁰ As demonstrated in the teachings of the Buddha cited above, each element of the Five Aggregates is intrinsically impermanent. Therefore, our bodies and minds, composed of these aggregates, are also impermanent. This impermanence signifies that they are inevitably subject to decay and dissolution, and considering them as the permanent essence of oneself leads to the root of suffering. Moreover, since they are constantly changing, one cannot pinpoint a particular moment and definitively say, 'this is myself.' Similarly, as we cannot alter the fact that they will age and eventually perish, they cannot be considered 'mine.' Hence, they ultimately do not constitute 'my self.' Therefore, the self is explained in the above citation as *anattā* (無我, *anatman*), a term formed by combining the negation prefix *an* with *attā* (or *ātman* in Sanskrit),

²²⁹ Jongwook Kim, “무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the Buddhist Concept of Non-self],” *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 105.

²³⁰ Kyungah Choi points out that the term *Skandha*, used in Buddhism to refer to the Five Aggregates, was not originally coined in Buddhist tradition. According to her, the root of this term is *skand* (to leap), and in the pre-Buddhist Vedic tradition, it was used to mean 'branch of a tree.' *Skandha* also meant 'shoulder' in some contexts. This meaning of *Skandha* appears in the Upanishadic tradition both before and after Buddhism. Choi draws attention to the imagery of 'connection' or 'union' that is evident in the relationship between the trunk and branches of a tree, to explain how this term came to be used in Buddhist tradition to mean the aggregates that constitute the self. See Kyungah Choi, “자아와 개인에 대한 정의 고찰 [Some Thoughts on the Definition of Self and Person: Centered on Early Buddhism],” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 28 (2010): 96.

explored in the early discussions of the teaching of non-self.

The analysis of non-self in early Buddhism extends to an interpretation of the nature of experiences of the self. This logical extension implies that since the Five Aggregates that constitute our bodies and minds are empty, everything gained through the experience of the six sensory organs (六根) must also be empty. In relation to this point, the *Samyutta Nikaya*, Volume 4, states as follows:

Then the Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed one... and said to him: “Venerable sir, it is said, ‘Empty is the world, empty is the world.’ In what way, venerable sir, is it said, ‘Empty is the world’?”

“It is, Ānanda, because it is empty of the self and of what belongs to self that it is said, ‘Empty is the world.’ And what is empty of the self and of what belongs to self? The eye, Ānanda, is empty of the self and of what belongs to self. Forms are empty of the self and of what belongs to self. Eye-consciousness is empty of the self and of what belongs to self. Eye-contact is empty of the self and of what belongs to self. ... Whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant—that too is empty of the self and of what belongs to self. It is, Ānanda, because it is empty of the self and of what belongs to self that it is said, ‘Empty is the world.’”²³⁴

In response to Ananda's question about the emptiness of the world, the Buddha explains it through the example of visual experience. According to him, the sensory organ of the eye, the visual object of form, and the visual consciousness that arises between the eye and object are all empty in themselves, and everything associated with them is also empty. He further argues that the mental factors arising from such visual experiences, such as joy or pain, are also intrinsically

²³⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 1163-1164; The Pali original of this passage reads as follows: “atha kho āyasmā Ānando ...pe... Bhagavantam etadavoca. suñño loko suñño loko ti bhante vuccati. kittāvatā nu kho bhante suñño loko ti vuccatīti. yasmā ca kho Ānanda suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā tasmā suñño loko ti vuccati. Kiñ ca Ānanda suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā. cakkhum kho Ānanda suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā. Rūpā suññā attena vā attaniyena vā. cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā. cakkhusamphasso suñño attena vā attaniyena vā. ...pe... yamp’idaṃ manosamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā tam pi suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā. yasmā ca kho Ānanda suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā tasmā suñño loko ti vuccatī ti.” See M. Léon Feer, ed., *Samyutta-Nikāya, Part IV Saḷāyatana-Vagga*, rev. Peter Jackson (Bristol: Pali Text Society, 2014), 54.

empty. This logic, as applied in the context of vision, is equally applicable to all experiences constituted by the six sensory organs (六根), eventually extending to the form of the Eighteen Elements (十八界, *aṣṭadaśadhātu*). Considering that the Eighteen Elements in Buddhist tradition categorize all possible ways of experiencing the world as combinations of the six organs, six objects, and six consciousnesses, this expansion of logic leads to the conclusion, as the Buddha mentioned in the cited text, that 'the world is empty.'

However, recognizing sentient beings as suffering entities in the foundational view of non-self in early Buddhism does not solely stem from the fact that their bodies and minds are empty entities subject to the process of birth, aging, sickness, and death. These are merely factual conditions. The suffering implied in the doctrine of non-self is considered to arise when one fails to accept these given conditions as they are. In other words, the continuous pain of loss begins when one mistakenly perceives and clings to one's physical and mental existence, which is empty due to its conditional nature, as enduring. The *Samyutta Nikāya* describes the process of forming a mistaken understanding of the self based on the Five Aggregates as follows:

He lives obsessed by the notions: 'I am form, form is mine.' As he lives obsessed by these notions, that form of his changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair.

(The same pattern of description is repeated for feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.)²³⁵

The notion of the self is negated in early Buddhism, and it is the misperception/attachment to this concept that is viewed as leading to suffering. This understanding is based on the observation

²³⁵ Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 854-855.

that the mental and material elements constituting the empirical self are ultimately changeable and therefore not worthy of desire. This demonstrates that what was negated as 'self' in early Buddhism, akin to the 'unchanging inner self' or *ātman* defined in pre-Buddhist Indian traditions, is considered an immutable inner agent. In other words, what early Buddhism rejected was not the reality of experience itself, as the acknowledgment of experiential elements like suffering and attachment as part of the Four Noble Truths makes clear. However, those who fail to realize the truth of non-self, and are caught in the delusion of the self, fall into a cycle of suffering caused by the self-conception and the numerous emotions and actions it spawns. Liberation from this cycle of suffering, or ignorance (無明 *avidyā*), is the practical goal of Buddhist tradition, leading to Nirvāṇa.²³⁶ Ultimately, early Buddhist tradition approached the issue of the enduring self through descriptive analysis of the nature of experience. As Gethin points out, the analysis of "what is a being" through the five aggregates is one of the most well-established patterns of such analysis. Through the concept of the Five Aggregates, the process of experiences humans undergo is explained, and the continuation of actions and desires—often misguided—based on the practical value assigned to the quality of these experiences is elucidated. This establishes self-consciousness as the subject of such desires and actions, leading to the explanation of the continuity of karma and the cycle of rebirth.²³⁷

In summary, in early Buddhist thought, the self is an unattainable illusion without substance. Attachment to it represents a form of desire that can never be fully satisfied, leading

²³⁶ For an in-depth understanding of the concept of ignorance in early Buddhist tradition, see the following reference: Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146-149. In early Buddhism, ignorance refers to the erroneous belief in the existence of an unchanging self. As will be discussed later, this fundamental meaning of ignorance is still inherited in the Mahāyāna tradition. However, in the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, the concept of ignorance takes on slightly different connotations, incorporating ontological implications associated with the notion of One Mind (一心).

²³⁷ Ibid., 135-136.

inevitably to suffering. Mistakenly believing in and clinging to what is not the self is a fundamental misunderstanding of the Four Virtues (四德) of noble truth, particularly the misconception known as 'delusion of the self' (我顛倒). Therefore, it is clear that in the Buddhist tradition, correcting this misunderstanding of the self is a key aspect of the religious practice and is seen as the root of suffering. Accordingly, in early Buddhism, the continuing self is presented as a concept to be *overcome* through practices like observation, in order to perceive its non-substantiality correctly and ultimately escape from suffering. Even though the self has no substance, the early Buddhist tradition conceptualizes it as 'self' to facilitate awareness of its nonexistence, which is essential in the process of overcoming attachment and escaping the cycle of suffering and rebirth. In other words, despite the thorough negation of the self, early Buddhism abstractly posits the idea of the continuing self as a methodological expedient. This approach serves to observe the impermanence of the self and to break free from the cycle of suffering, ultimately leading to the true understanding of the self. Thus, teachings of the self in early Buddhism are not merely descriptive of a fact but are sometimes employed methodologically for imparting truth. This is why, in the *Ānanda-sutta*, when Vacchagotta asks whether the self exists, the Buddha neither affirms nor denies the concept of the self, despite considering it empty.²³⁸ At this point, it is important to remember that 'denying the self' and

²³⁸ The conversation between the Buddha and his disciple goes as follows: "Then the wanderer Vacchagotta approached the Blessed One ... and said to him: "How is it now, Master Gotama, is there a self?" When this was said, the Blessed One was silent ... Then, not long after the wanderer Vacchagotta had left, the Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "Why is it, venerable sir, that when the Blessed One was questioned by the wanderer Vacchagotta, he did not answer?" ... "If, Ānanda, when I was asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, 'Is there a self?' I had answered, 'There is a self,' would this have been consistent on my part with the arising of the knowledge that 'all phenomena are nonself'?"

"No, venerable sir."

"And if, when I was asked by him, 'Is there no self?' I had answered, 'There is no self,' the wanderer Vacchagotta, already confused, would have fallen into even greater confusion, thinking, 'It seems that the self I formerly had does not exist now.'" See Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta*

‘denying the concept of the self’ are not the same assertion. As Gethin points out, what early Buddhism negates is solely the "self as an enduring substance," and not the concept of a continuing self.²³⁹ This distinction is crucial because such interpretations of the self and awakening transcend early Buddhism and pervade the context of subsequent Buddhist teachings such as the Two Truths doctrine (二諦論, *dvasatya*), which includes the synthesis of the concepts of the self and non-self. It is at this juncture, where the concepts of the self and non-self coexist abstractly, that we return to the issue of personal identity within the Buddhist tradition.

3.2.2 Issues Surrounding Personal Identity in Early Buddhist Tradition

Yasuaki Nara proposes that the issue of personal identity in Buddhist tradition is not only doctrinally challenging to fully comprehend but also continues to have unresolved aspects related to religious practice.²⁴⁰ Concerning personal identity, one philosophical difficulty with early Buddhism's view of the self, which negates any persistent self beyond the empirical self formed by the aggregation of the Five Aggregates, is the seeming incompatibility of this view

Nikāya (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 1393-1394.

²³⁹ Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 145-146. However, Gethin adds that the Buddha's reluctance to unequivocally answer questions about the existence of the self should not be seen as leaving the door open for interpretations of a metaphysical, absolute self. He clarifies this point by noting that in various early scriptures, the Buddha explicitly states that the constituents of the self are nothing more than the Five Aggregates. In early Buddhist tradition, the notion of a persistent self is described as a delusion held only by those who are misguided, while those who have truly attained awakening are completely free from such erroneous views. However, as will be discussed later, in relation to debates over the concept of the ‘not-self (非我),’ it appears that Gethin's argument has not been very convincing among Buddhist scholars. See *Ibid.*, 159-162.

²⁴⁰ Yasuaki Nara identifies two significant issues related to the self within Buddhist tradition. One concerns the existential reality of the self as an agent, and the other deals with the logical contradiction between the doctrine of non-self and the concept the subject of reincarnation. From my perspective, both of these points are inherently related to the issue of personal identity. See Yasuaki Nara, “仏教からみた私・自我・靈魂 (The Self, Ego, and Soul from a Buddhist Perspective),” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 36 (2012): 287-288.

with two other traditional Buddhist concepts: karmic retribution (業報, *karma-vipāka*) and reincarnation (輪迴, *saṃsāra*). The basic meaning of the Sanskrit word karma is action, referring generally to all things carried out through the body, speech, and the mind in Buddhist tradition. When examining the theory of dependent origination in early Buddhism and its subsequent developments, it is evident that certain actions produce commensurate results (果, *phala*), and this continuity of karma extends from one life to the next. Hence, the logical condition for emphasizing the importance of practice and Nirvāṇa in Buddhist tradition can be explained by the necessity that a practitioner, if not liberated from this cycle of commensurate karmic values through practice, will continue to suffer in this or future lives.

This logic presumes that the practitioner making karma and receiving its fruits, whether within a single lifetime or across multiple lives, remains the same individual. Therefore, inevitably, an explanation for the necessity of a continuous personal identity becomes imperative, which seems incompatible with early Buddhism's non-self teaching, which views the self merely as a temporal aggregation of the Five Aggregates. This potential incompatibility cannot be overlooked, as both the concepts of non-self and the idea of the continuity of karma are essential for Buddhist premises of fundamental suffering and for justifying Buddhist practice and Nirvāṇa. The concept of non-self is necessary for a practitioner to feel suffering from attachment to permanence and realize the need for Nirvāṇa. This notion, as one of the Three Dharma Seals (三法印, *trilakṣaṇa*), is considered a firm truth and cannot be compromised. Simultaneously, the practitioner influenced by the cycle of karma across multiple lives must be regarded as the same agent to avoid a nihilistic attitude that 'all suffering ends with the death of a single life' and to seek Nirvāṇa through practice. As described in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the only way to be

liberated from the cycle of life and death is by stopping the creation of karma influenced by the three poisons (greed, hatred, and ignorance).²⁴¹ If suffering were to cease permanently with the death of a single life, the necessity of Nirvāṇa through practice would inevitably be weakened. In this regard, the concept of reincarnation presupposes that such suffering can continue in the afterlife, thereby encouraging the practitioner to aspire more for the achievement of Nirvāṇa.

According to Kyungah Choi, the interest of Indian philosophers since the Upanishadic tradition primarily dwelt on the exploration of the self and the world. This philosophical tendency continued into the Buddhist tradition, becoming a key theme. However, the notion of the self in early Buddhism was not treated as an independent entity but rather as a subject of experience, focusing on its relationship with the external world. The categorizations of existence and the world, such as the Five Aggregates, Twelve Faculties (十二處, *dvādaśāyatana*), and Eighteen Elements (十八界), support this view. The emergence of the Buddhist teaching of non-self (*anātmavāda*) within this context, which leads to intricate issues about personal identity, may not be entirely surprising. Choi notes that this background surrounding early Buddhism's issues of personal identity likely contributed to the problem of personal identity becoming a major philosophical issue in the later Abhidharma tradition.²⁴²

A more radical interpretation considers the division of Buddhist monastic communities into different schools during the era of sectarian Buddhism as partly due to differing interpretive

²⁴¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, 2012), 230-232.

²⁴² Kyungah Choi, “자아와 개인에 대한 정의 고찰 [Some Thoughts on the Definition of Self and Person: Centered on Early Buddhism],” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 28 (2010): 85-86.

views on what we may call the 'identical subject concept.'²⁴³ While the background to the emergence of sectarian Buddhist traditions is yet to be determined, it is not difficult to find traces of contemplation on the issue of personal identity in the Abhidharma texts of these traditions. For instance, in Vasubandhu's (世親, 316-396) *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (阿毘達磨俱舍論), which is commonly viewed as a philosophical culmination of early Buddhism's doctrine of non-self,²⁴⁴ one finds the following statement in its ninth chapter: "Indeed, every action requires an agent. Just as when it is said, 'Devadatta goes' (*Devadatto gacchati*), the act of going necessitates Devadatta as the one who goes. Consciousness is an action."²⁴⁵ Therefore, the act of being conscious must have its agent."²⁴⁶ This cited passage from the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* raises a philosophical question: if consciousness activities are considered actions, is there not a need for an agent or a subject to carry out these actions? Despite this question, Soonil Hwang notes that the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* clearly supports the doctrine of non-self. This is evidenced by the subsequent text that adds: "And the non-Buddhists (*tīrthakara*), such as those from Jainism, believe the self to be indeed a separate entity. They are indisputably in error here, as liberation is

²⁴³ Byounggeun Ahn, "자아에 대한 불교의 관점과 그 시사점 [The Buddhist View of the Self and Its Implications]," *Journal of Education Studies* (教育論叢) 51, no. 2 (2014): 92.

²⁴⁴ Seongcheol Kim, "여래장사상에서 자아와 무아 [Ātman and Anātman in the Tathāgatagarbha Thought]," *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 37 (2013): 116.

²⁴⁵ The most extensive analyses of consciousness or awareness in Buddhist traditions arguably come from the Abhidharma tradition. According to Georges Dreyfus, the most fundamental definition of consciousness in the Abhidharma can be expressed as "apprehension of each object" or "nothing other than the process of cognizing the object." In these definitions, despite Dreyfus himself denying its persistence, a subject that maintains a cognitive relationship with an object is presupposed. See Georges Dreyfus, "Self and Subjectivity: A Middle Way Approach," in *Self, No Self?: Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*, edited by Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi (Oxford University Press, 2011), 119.

²⁴⁶ See the following for the translation of the cited *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* and Soonil Hwang's related argument: Soonil Hwang, "구사론 파아품에 나타난 자아논증과 그 비판 [An argument for the demonstration of *ātman* in the ninth chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*]," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 31 (2011): 117-120.

impossible in their view.”²⁴⁷ This appended statement categorizes those who believe in a separate entity as the self as non-Buddhists, and asserts they cannot achieve liberation, thereby affirming the stance of non-self. However, these statements from the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* do suggest that the issue of the self or the agent was indeed raised at the time, and it was likely one of the significant points of contention.

The core stance on non-self, which asserts that everything constituted by the aggregation of the Five Aggregates is inherently empty, and the theory of karma, which necessitates that the subject that is creating and receiving the fruits of karma must be considered the same individual, seemingly present a dissonance. It appears that this dissonance has been a recurrent and critical issue in the discourse of post-sectarian Buddhist tradition. As contemporary Buddhist scholars have attempted many times, further philosophical clarification on this issue may still be deemed necessary.²⁴⁸ If there were strategic attempts to bridge this logical gap during the development of Indian Buddhist tradition, I believe that they would likely involve the concept of the Two Truths and the idea of the Middle Way (中道, *Madhyamā pratipada*, Pali: *Majjhimā paṭipadā*), which harmoniously acknowledges the practical values of both.²⁴⁹ Generally, the Two Truths Doctrine

²⁴⁷ For the translation of this passage, see *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁴⁸ The interpretation of concepts like subjectivity and consciousness in a Buddhist context appears to hinge on the understanding of the self. The stance of contemporary Buddhist scholars on the self is divided, just like traditional debates, between a complete rejection of the self and refutations of such a stance. For the interpretations and arguments presented by contemporary Buddhist scholars such as Dan Zahavi, Miri Albahari, and Rupert Gethin on the issue of the self, refer to the following source: Georges Dreyfus, “Self and Subjectivity: A Middle Way Approach,” in *Self, No Self?: Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*, edited by Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi (Oxford University Press, 2011), 125-135.

²⁴⁹ The concept of the Middle Way is one of the oldest notions in Buddhist tradition. Its textual origin can be traced back to the Buddha's first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (轉法輪經). For more on the relationship between the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* and the concept of the Middle Way, refer to the following source: Sooyoung Nam, “초기 불교의 중도 개념 재검토 [A Re-examination of the Middle-way Conception in Early Buddhism],” *남아시아연구* [Journal of South Asian Studies] 21 (2015): 58-60; The Pali term *Majjhimā paṭipadā*, which signifies the ‘Middle Way,’ is a compound word formed by combining the adjective *majjhima*, meaning ‘middle,’ and the feminine noun *paṭipadā*, which conveys meanings such as ‘path leading to a goal’ or ‘practice.’ This

in Buddhism distinguishes the Buddha's teachings into conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*), focusing on their expedient value of the teaching, and ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*), the highest and most excellent truth.²⁵⁰ *Paramārtha-satya* can also be referred to as the supreme or the foremost truth which is ineffable. On the other hand, *saṃvṛti-satya*, typically translated as 'common,' 'relative,' or 'conventional,' generally refers to relative truth that can be expressed in language. The dichotomy of conventional and ultimate truths as methodologies for interpreting and transmitting the Buddha's teaching has been an important concept in most Buddhist traditions, with its basic meaning remaining largely unchanged. Since Buddhist tradition values the process of pursuing truth as much as the truth itself, namely practice, the practical value of the conventional truth as a skillful means has been widely accepted in most traditions.²⁵¹

The discussion of the Two Truths Doctrine began in earnest, it seems fair to say, with the

term was translated into Zhongdao (中道) in East Asian regions, a translation that well preserves the original meaning. For an etymological interpretation of *Majjhimā paṭipadā*, see the following source: Sanghee Han, “초기불교의 중도와 무아, 그리고 공 [*Majjhimā paṭipadā*, *Anattā* and *Sunnatā* in Early Buddhism]”, *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 60 (2019): 2.

²⁵⁰ Hyoyeop Park argues that the Two Truths Doctrine, which divides truth into two aspects, is not exclusive to Buddhism. While not as sophisticated as the Buddhist version and differing in specifics, the Two Truths Doctrine is a common feature in Indian philosophy, including Upaniṣadic Hindu philosophy and Vedānta. One shared characteristic of the Two Truths Doctrine within the history of Indian philosophy is the contemplation of the limits of language. It perceives everyday language and thought as incapable of fully capturing or expressing the true reality. Park refers to this as the "transcendence of language" or "the ineffable (*anabhilāpya*).” For more information, see Hyoyeop Park, “불교의 이제설과 관련되는 우빠니샤드의 논의 [Upaniṣadic Discussion related the Theory of Two Truths of Buddhism],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 89 (2018): 166-168.

²⁵¹ According to Eugene Ha, the concept of ultimate truth in early interpretations of the Two Truths, as presented in the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures like the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, signifies two key meanings: the emptiness of nature (性空) and non-discrimination (無分別). The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* defines conventional truth as the linguistic teachings used temporarily to convey the meaning of ultimate truth. In response to Subhūti's question about the difference between ultimate and conventional truths, the Sūtra elucidates that there is no difference in their intended purpose. This answer suggests an acknowledgment of the unique value of both ultimate and conventional truths as methods of transmitting truth. See Eugene Ha, “불교의 이제설 [Study on the Two Truths in Buddhism],” *Sogang Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2008): 118-120.

emergence of the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures.²⁵² Although the terms ‘two truth (二諦)’ and ‘ultimate truth (真諦)’ appear in earlier texts like the *Madhyama Āgama* (中阿含經) and the *Ekottara Āgama* (增一阿含經), it is unclear if their use in these early scriptures shares the same logical characteristics established in the Prajñāpāramitā tradition.²⁵³ In the Indian Buddhist tradition, it is fundamentally understood that both the self and the world experienced by the self are empty, and anything that exists phenomenally is just a temporary manifestation arising from the continuity of karma (action and its results), as per the doctrine of non-self. Thus, nothing qualifies as a self in the ultimate sense. However, it is essential to recognize that sentient beings still require a conception of the self as the subject of karma and the agent of practice. This need leads to the provisional adoption of a subject composed of psychophysical elements that align with dependent origination and the theory of reincarnation. In Indian Buddhist practice, the notion of the self is formed in this way. However, the practical value of the concept of the self in the conventional truth is determined by its expediency. Hence, this constructed notion of the self, while indispensable in practice, ultimately possesses a transient nature and must be correctly

²⁵² The Mādhyamika tradition, known for actively utilizing the Two Truths Doctrine, refuted both the Sarvastivada's (說一切有部) theory of substantial existence and the nihilistic viewpoint (or absolute non-existence) of the Vetulya (方廣部), proposing the concepts of ‘emptiness (空, *Śūnyatā*)’ and ‘conventional existence (假有, *prajñapti-sat*).’ The Mādhyamikas emphasized a middle Way between these two notions. Their concept of emptiness was derived from the principle of dependent origination, asserting that all phenomena are temporary constructs dependent on conditions. Thus, the concepts of emptiness and conventional existence were, in reality, interdependent (二諦相即). As the monk Sengzhao (僧肇, 383-414), who inherited the Mādhyamika tradition in the Jin (晉) Dynasty of China, argued: existence (有) and non-existence (無) are only different in name, but their essence is one. For more on the characteristics of the Mādhyamika's Two Truths Doctrine, see *Ibid.*, 123; For a detailed discussion on Sengzhao's descriptions of the concepts of existence and non-existence, see the following reference: “故經云：「真諦、俗諦謂有異耶？答曰：無異也。」此經直辯真諦以明非有，俗諦以明非無；豈以諦二而二於物哉？然則萬物果有其所以不有，有其所以不無。有其所以不有，故雖有而非有；有其所以不無，故雖無而非無。雖無而非無，無者不絕虛；雖有而非有，有者非真有。若有不即真，無不夷跡，然則有無稱異，其致一也。” Sengzhao (僧肇), the *Zhao lun* (肇論), T.45.1858.0152b15-22.

²⁵³ Eugene Ha, “불교의 이체설 [Study on the Two Truths in Buddhism],” *Sogang Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2008): 115-116.

understood according to the non-self perspective of ultimate truth.

In the tradition of early Buddhism, the Middle Way is presented as a balanced approach and method that does not lean towards either of the two truths but rather accepts them harmoniously.²⁵⁴ Although the philosophical seeds of the Two Truths Doctrine may have existed earlier, it was Nāgārjuna (龍樹, c.150-c.250) in his *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (中論頌) who first systematized these ideas into a cohesive practical methodology. Integrating the ideas of the middle way between asceticism and hedonism (*madhyamā pratipad*) and the non-duality (neither existence nor non-existence) from early Buddhism, Nāgārjuna laid the groundwork for Mahāyāna Prajñāpāramitā philosophy. He pointed out that only through conventional expression (*vyavahāra*) can the ultimate truth be taught, and understanding the ultimate truth is necessary for achieving Nirvāṇa.²⁵⁵

Based upon the idea of Middle Way, the implications of all dharmas associated with the principle of dependent origination are interpreted as follows: By naming the self as 'self,' despite

²⁵⁴ Sooyoung Nam's analysis of the concept of the Middle Way, as presented in the early scriptures, is organized into two main interpretations: 1) According to the explanation found in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (轉法輪經), the Middle Way signifies a path that avoids the extremes of both materialistic hedonism, advocated by Ajita Kesakambalin, a proponent of one of the six non-Buddhist schools (六師外道), and the asceticism primarily practiced in Jainism. 2) The second interpretation, as described in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* (迦栴延經), suggests that the Middle Way is a departure from the two extremes found in non-Buddhist doctrines: the eternalism (the belief that "everything exists") and annihilationism (the belief that "nothing exists"). During that time, eternalism was circulated through the Upaniṣadic and Sāṅkhya traditions, while annihilationism was promoted by figures like Pūrṇa Kāśyapa. In my research, the concept of emptiness (空) related to the Two Truths Doctrine is being used in this second sense. See Sooyoung Nam, “초기 불교의 중도 개념 재검토 [A Re-examination of the Middle-way Conception in Early Buddhism],” *남아시아연구* [Journal of South Asian Studies] 21 (2015): 61-63; Sanghee Han, referencing the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta*, and the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*, points out that the two extremes the Buddha primarily advised against are a life of sensual pleasure and a life of asceticism. These lifestyles can be understood in the context of the philosophical extremes of annihilationism (absolute non-existence) and eternalism (absolute existence), respectively. See Sanghee Han, “초기 불교의 중도와 무아, 그리고 공 [*Majjhimā paṭipadā*, *Anattā* and *Sunnatā* in Early Buddhism],” *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 60 (2019): 12-14.

²⁵⁵ Hyoyeop Park, “불교의 이제설과 관련된 우빠니샤드의 논의 [Upaniṣadic Discussion related the Theory of Two Truths of Buddhism],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 89 (2018): 171-172.

its lack of substance, one can reach the truth of its non-substantiality. Only by attaining this truth can one achieve Nirvāṇa. Essentially, the self that exists phenomenally is 'pseudo-individuality.' It exists due to the continuous flow of karmic retribution, yet it is perpetually changing and lacks a fixed essence.²⁵⁶ Assigning these transient entities temporary names (假名, *prajñapti*) through language serves as a skillful means to guide sentient beings.²⁵⁷ Therefore, from the perspective of conventional truth, these entities can be seen as existent (有), while from the standpoint of ultimate truth, they can be viewed as non-existent (無). Thus, in the Indian Buddhist tradition, the existence of the self is neither wholly negated nor wholly affirmed.²⁵⁸ This middle-ground approach to existence is also explored in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Here, the Buddha elucidates the concept of the Middle Way and the Right View (正見, Pali: *Sammādiṭṭhi*) to his disciple Kaccāna (Kaccāyana):

This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends upon a duality—upon the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of nonexistence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world.

²⁵⁶ Similarly, Rupert Gettin defines the concept of the Middle Way as presenting "a person as subsisting in the causal connectedness of dependent arising." In his view, the Middle Way specifically refers to the middle ground between the views of 'eternalism' (*sassata-vāda*) and 'annihilationism' (*uccheda-vāda*). See Rupert Gettin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 145.

²⁵⁷ Jongwook Kim, "무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the Buddhist Concept of Non-self]," *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 115.

²⁵⁸ Introducing David J. Kalupahana's empiricist interpretation, Insub Hur argues that Nagarjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* makes an effort to avoid absolutization and metaphysical interpretations when explaining truth in conceptual language. According to Kalupahana's view, as presented by Hur, the topics covered from chapters 3 to 15 of the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* are attempts to reorient various topics from early Buddhism that have been misinterpreted metaphysically based on substantialism. Consequently, Hur claims that the true essence of the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* is actually encapsulated in chapter 26 (觀十二因緣品), which discusses dependent origination. See Insub Her, "공 개념의 현대적 해석의 문제점 고찰 [A Critical Review on Modern Interpretation of the Concept of 'śūnya']," *The Journal of Asian Philosophy in Korea* (東洋哲學) 34 (2010): 727-732.

This world, Kaccāna, is for the most part shackled by engagement, clinging, and adherence. But this one [with right view] does not become engaged and cling through that engagement and clinging, mental standpoint, adherence, underlying tendency; he does not take a stand about ‘my self.’ He has no perplexity or doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing. His knowledge about this is independent of others. It is in this way, Kaccāna, that these is right view.

‘All exists’: Kaccāna, this is one extreme. ‘All does not exist’: this is the second extreme. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle.²⁵⁹

From the above discussion, it is evident that the two extreme views that the Buddha identifies as the source of suffering essentially pertain to opposing understandings of phenomena, including the self. According to the Buddha, phenomena cannot be said to not exist, as they are apparent in the world. Nor can they be said to exist, since they are all conditional and inevitably subject to cessation. Consequently, these two extreme views inevitably lead sentient beings to experience existential suffering. The Middle Way, as described by the Buddha in the cited text, is a viewpoint that avoids these extremes, seeing phenomena *as they are*.²⁶⁰ This Right View involves

²⁵⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 544; The Pali original of this passage reads as follows: “Dvayanissito khvāyaṃ Kaccāyana loko yebhuyyena atthitañ ceva natthitañ ca. Lokasamudayaṃ kho kaccāyana yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti. Lokanirodhaṃ kho Kaccāyana yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti. Upāyupādānābhinivesavinibandho khvāyaṃ Kaccāyana loko yebhuyyena tañcayaṃ upāyupādānaṃ cetaso adhiṭṭhānaṃ abhinivesānusayaṃ na upeti na upādiyati nādiṭṭhāti attānaṃ eti. Dukkhaṃ eva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhatīti na kaṅkhati na vicikicchati aparappaccayā ñāṇaṃ evassa ettha hoti. Ettāvataṃ kho Kaccāna sammādiṭṭhi hoti. Sabbam atthīti kho Kaccāyana ayam eko anto. Sabbam natthīti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te Kaccāyana ubho ante anupagamma majjhena Tathāgato dhammam deseti.” M. Léon Feer, ed., *Saṃyutta-Nikāya, Part II Nidāna-Vagga* (London: Pali Text Society, Oxford University Press, 1888), 17.

²⁶⁰ Avoiding extremes is a key point in understanding the Middle Way. This approach can be applied not only in interpreting the concept of the self but also in understanding other major Buddhist notions. For instance, in discussing Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (十二緣起), Gethin summarizes the characteristics of dependent origination interpreted through the lens of the Middle Way as follows: 1) Dependent origination rejects the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism by illustrating how identity and continuity coexist within the process of change. 2) It indicates the diversity of phenomena involved in the ongoing process of causation, again rejecting both eternalism and annihilationism. 3) Dependent origination challenges the notions of a fixed, unchanging self and moral nihilism by showing that actions are not purely the work of an autonomous self, but rather the result of interactions with various impersonal conditions. 4) It refutes both the view that actions are the result of absolute free will and the perspective of determinism (the belief in no choice), by demonstrating that specific actions are followed by appropriate consequences. See Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 156.

relinquishing attachment and prejudice towards all phenomena, including the self, and realizing that attachment to them only breeds misery. By attaining this Right View, a practitioner can break the cycle of reincarnation and become free from suffering.

Notably, discussions about the self within the Indian Buddhist tradition remain focused on the ontological level of phenomenal existence. As the Buddha points out, the self exists phenomenally and thus can be said to 'exist.' However, its eventual dissolution also means it can be considered as 'non-existent.' This approach does not (and probably does not need to) delve into metaphysical conceptions of the self, such as the self as an *a priori* condition for experience and cognition, the self as an agent of reincarnation, or the self as a substantial ground of the phenomena. This highlights how the early Buddhist view of the self differs significantly from the concepts of the self found in pre-Buddhist ancient Indian thought and later developments like the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine. The Middle Way, as a method or means to attain the right view by avoiding extremes, can be seen as encompassing a practical aspect. Early Buddhist texts in the Nikāyas illustrate this concept by equating it with practices like the Eightfold Path (八正道, *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) or the correct understanding of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (十二緣起, *dvādaśa-astanga pratīyasamutpāda*) and the Four Noble Truths, suggesting that the Middle Way is a comprehensive practice encompassing various principles of Buddhist practice.²⁶¹ The Two Truths Doctrine thus offers a way of interpretation that encompasses ontological, epistemological, and practical dimensions.²⁶² This approach provides a compelling answer to the complex issue of the 'self that exists yet does not exist,' as presented in early

²⁶¹ Sanghee Han, “초기불교의 중도와 무아, 그리고 공 [*Majjhimā paṭipadā*, *Anattā* and *Sunnatā* in Early Buddhism]”, *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 60 (2019): 13.

²⁶² Hyoyeop Park, “불교의 이제설과 관련되는 우빠니샤드의 논의 [Upaniṣadic Discussion related the Theory of Two Truths of Buddhism]”, *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 89 (2018): 173.

Buddhism, offering a multifaceted understanding that goes beyond simple binary definitions.

The understanding of the self in early Buddhism through the Two Truths Doctrine aligns to some extent with the chariot analogy in the *Milinda Panha*. Contemporary Buddhist scholars' strategies for resolving the issue of personal identity in early Buddhism seem not fundamentally different from this understanding. These strategies involve explaining consciousness and experiential activities and their karmic consequences while denying the existence of a self or subject. This approach could be termed "mereological reductionism," where the whole (the self) is understood merely as a collection of its preceding parts (such as feelings, thoughts, sensations in Buddhism) without ascribing any inherent identity to the whole.²⁶³ This approach seems successful in rhetorically circumventing the incompatibility of non-self with karma and reincarnation. However, secondary philosophical issues arising from this view of the self could be raised. For instance, this strategy does not provide a clear definition or explanation of the self, conceived as an aggregation of partial constituents. Questions like 'What then is the form of the self that is variable yet considered to have a personal identity?' or 'How is the personal identity of the self, seen as a collection of changeable parts, defined?' remain unanswered, leaving the concept of the Middle Way look abstract and vague. While the Middle Way strategy offers a balanced view, it leaves the question 'What is the self?' partially unexplained.

Furthermore, if the early Buddhist logic of negating the self is strictly applied, the same reasons for negating the self and its constituents (its impermanence and conditionality) must also apply to the conscious and experiential activities aimed at the final awakening. This raises fundamental questions about the practicality of the path to awakening. If the elements

²⁶³ Anthony Rudd, "No Self? Some Reflections on Buddhist Theories of Personal Identity," *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 3 (2015): 872.

constituting the path are themselves essentially empty, then the efficacy of these elements in leading to awakening cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, as Rudd points out, this approach raises questions about the possibility of defining consciousness and experiential activities, typically associated with the self, as 'pre-existing' without presupposing a self or subject.²⁶⁴ Recognizing the existence of conscious and experiential activities prior to considering the existence of the self can be perceived as an unconventional ontological stance. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that the Indian Buddhist tradition has long been conscious of the philosophical challenges surrounding the issue of personal identity, and the fruits of their efforts to clarify these challenges continue to garner support.

Nevertheless, critiquing or deriving secondary philosophical issues from the concept of the self in early Buddhism is not the objective of this research. Rather, it is important to examine how the concept of the self and related interpretations in early Buddhism were understood, and how they addressed issues of personal identity. In early Buddhist tradition, understanding the empirical self hinges critically on defining the relationship between subjects and their experience. Philosophical contemplations often presuppose the subject's existence before experience begins, that is to say, existence is assumed to be ontologically prior to experience. However, in early Buddhism, the subject seems to be construed as something formed by experience, or at least, subject and experience are understood to be simultaneous. Essentially, to exist as a subject means nothing more than to be experiencing as a subject. In other words, the subject is merely the continuity of events that constitute subjective experience. It is not that the subject experiences, but rather, the act of experiencing itself constitutes the subject. This interpretation of the subject in early Buddhism is what underpins some contemporary Buddhist scholars' view of the subject

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 872-873.

as a form of 'mereological reductionism.' One of the key early Buddhist scriptures, the *Dhammapada* (法句經), states regarding the concept of the self that: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts."²⁶⁵ This definition of the self supports the aforementioned characteristics of subject and experience in early Buddhism. The notion of the empirical self may not be entirely unfamiliar in existing philosophical discourses on the self. For instance, in refuting the *problematic idealism* of Descartes, which posits that the only certainty for an individual is his inner world of ideas while casting doubt on the existence of the external world, Kant argues that external experience is inherently direct and that internal experience is contingent upon such external experience. Thus, the certainty of internal experience is no more evident than the clarity of experience regarding external objects. Ultimately, both the external world and an individual's internal ideas are phenomena constituted by subjective categories or conditions.²⁶⁶ Kant's notion of the individual as part of the phenomenal world, in mutual constitution with objects of the world, shares key features with the empirical self in early Buddhist tradition."

²⁶⁵ Kurethara S. Bose, "The Transformation of the Self in Mahayana Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist* (New Series) 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 146.

²⁶⁶ Jakyoungh Han, "칸트 철학에서 초월자아의 이해 (Understanding the Transcendental Self in Kant's Philosophy)," *Journal of The Society of Philosophical Studies*, Special Volume '칸트와 현대철학 (Kant and Modern Philosophy),' 1995, 176–180; According to Kant, in order to determine oneself within time, one must presuppose in the form of time something persistent in their perception of themselves. However, if my existence is defined by such persistence, it cannot be something that is exclusively internal. In other words, this persistent element can only be possible through something outside of me, and hence, the determination of my existence is only possible through things that exist externally. Kant refers to this consciousness of the self as the "intellectual representation of the self-activity of a thinking subject." For a critique of Cartesian idealism and Kant's own interpretation of the relationship between the constructed individual and the world, refer to the following source: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B274–B287.

3.2.3 The Emergence of the Not-Self (非我) Interpretation

Despite the understanding of the concept of that self developed in the tradition of early Buddhism, some Buddhist scholars today still believe that there is a lack of smooth harmony between the non-self (無我) doctrine and the concepts of karmic retribution and reincarnation. For example, Yasuaki Nara argues that the inconsistency between the concepts of non-self and reincarnation arises because the concept of reincarnation was not originally a Buddhist teaching by the Buddha but a widely prevalent folk belief in India, and its incorporation into Buddhism inevitably led to logical issues. Based on this, he states, “It is clear that the soul, as the subject of karma going through the cycle of rebirth, and the non-self doctrine are incompatible.” He further asserts that the notion of reincarnation is not necessarily essential to the Buddhist faith but is more of a folk or customary belief.²⁶⁷ However, he also discusses the concept of karma and the six realms of reincarnation (六道輪廻), saying: “The core of the karma and reincarnation concepts is the cause and effect of karma and its inevitability. Sentient beings, by observing precepts and performing meritorious acts like giving, accumulate merit and aspire to be reborn in heavenly realms where a comfortable life is guaranteed. ... This is traditionally passed down as an ethical foundation for why one should not abstain from living a virtuous life.”²⁶⁸ This argument views the theories of karma and reincarnation as essential in the practice and attainment of Nirvāṇa in the early Buddhist tradition. Implicitly, it acknowledges the necessity of a concept of a consistent subject that creates karma and receives its fruits behind the circulations of karma.

Thus, in response to the unresolved tension between the non-self doctrine and the

²⁶⁷ Yasuaki Nara, “仏教からみた私・自我・靈魂 (The Self, Ego, and Soul from a Buddhist Perspective),” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 36 (2012): 298-300.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 299.

concepts of karmic retribution and reincarnation within early Buddhism, some contemporary scholars have raised questions regarding the interpretations of the Five Aggregates and non-self. This has led to the emergence of the not-self (非我) interpretation. Yasuaki Nara, referencing Hajime Nakamura's (中村 元) work *自我と無我* (Self and Non-Self) argues that the Pali term *attan*, often appearing in early Buddhist scriptures, did not exclusively denote a metaphysical self. Instead, it was more commonly used to signify the 'self as an agent' in a practical sense. This implies an interpretation of the self in early Buddhism as not necessarily referring to an object of complete negation. Furthermore, Yasuaki Nara cites Hajime Nakamura's remark that phrases or predicates indicating "ātman does not exist" do not exist in the primitive Buddhist scriptures (原始佛典). He argues that the conventional translation of *an-attan*, the negation of *attan*, as "non-self" (無我) has led to many misunderstandings. According to him, *an-attan* should not be interpreted as "non-self" but rather as "not-self," suggesting that the Buddha might have regarded something as the true self. Nara contends that the Buddha's advocacy of not-self, rather than non-self, in the early teachings was aimed at correcting the wrongful attachment to 'what is not self,' practically observing or taking care of oneself as the subject of action. However, he acknowledges that over time, the meaning of *attan* shifted from 'the subject of practical action' to 'a persistent metaphysical self.'²⁶⁹

Regarding the interpretative opposition between the concepts of non-self (無我) and not-self (非我), Soonil Hwang points out that it is not clear in early Buddhist scriptures whether the denial of the Five Aggregates represents a total negation of all forms of the self, as in the non-

²⁶⁹ For further information on Yasuaki Nara's arguments, see *Ibid.*, 288-291.

self view, or whether it implies that the self is not merely confined to these five aggregates, leaving room for the possibility of other forms of the self, as in the not-self view. According to him, this issue remains a topic of debate even today. However, Hwang notes that since the emergence of the Abhidharma tradition, especially with the centrality of the Sarvāstivāda (說一切有部)²⁷⁰ and the development of *dharma theory*, the traditional Buddhist stance on the self solidified into the non-self doctrine. The concept of *Pudgala*,²⁷¹ often used to refer to the self, was firmly defined as a composite of numerous phenomenal elements (*dharmas*), leading to a thorough rejection of a fixed, immutable self in what became known as the doctrine of non-self.²⁷²

Regardless of the validity of their interpretation, it appears evident that proponents of the not-self interpretation do have textual support for their perspective. For instance, at the beginning of the *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經, *Samyuktāgama*), the following passage is found:

²⁷⁰ According to Jongwook Kim, the Sarvāstivāda, rooted in the northwestern regions of India, was a school within the Abhidharma tradition that produced a significant number of treatises. The name ‘Sarvāstivāda’ translates to ‘those who proclaim that everything exists,’ reflecting their assertion that 75 types of dharmas, considered the ultimate elements of all existence, are real. Kim explains that the realism of the Sarvāstivāda, although built upon the foundation of the early Buddhist teaching of non-self, inevitably posited an underlying substratum, the *svabhāva* (自性). It led to later criticisms by figures such as Nāgārjuna. For Jongwook Kim’s interpretation of the understanding of non-self in the Sarvāstivāda, see: Jongwook Kim, “무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the Buddhist Concept of Non-self],” *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 109-111.

²⁷¹ In early Buddhist scriptures, the Sanskrit term *pudgala* (transliterated as ‘*bütèjīāluó* 補特伽羅’ in Chinese, often interpreted as ‘person 人’) is frequently used to denote the empirical self, typically translated as ‘ego’ or ‘individual.’ Kyungah Choi notes that this term is absent in the pre-Buddhist Vedic tradition, but was utilized in the contemporary Jain tradition to signify ‘substance that constitutes the world.’ *Pudgala*, indicating spatio-temporal entities, carries a meaning in stark contrast to *ātman*, which represents a persistent self. See Kyungah Choi, “자아와 개인에 대한 정의 고찰 [Some Thoughts on the Definition of the Self and Person: Centered on Early Buddhism],” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 28 (2010): 103-104.

²⁷² For a detailed exploration of Soonil Hwang’s argument regarding the opposition between the concepts of non-self and not-self, refer to the following source: Soonil Hwang, “구사론 파아품에 나타난 자아논증과 그 비판 [An argument for the demonstration of *ātman* in the ninth chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*],” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 31 (2011): 115-116.

The Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying, “Contemplate form (色) as impermanent. Such contemplation is called right observation (正觀). ... Likewise, contemplate feelings, perceptions, volitional formations, and consciousness as impermanent. Such contemplation is called right observation. ... Just as you observe (the Five Aggregates) as 'impermanence', observe them as 'suffering', 'emptiness', and 'not-self (非我).’”²⁷³

As evident in the aforementioned citation from the *Za Ahan Jing*, the term 'not-self' (非我) is utilized to indicate impermanence of the Five Aggregates. This suggests an imperative to observe the Five Aggregates, which may appear as 'self', as 'not-self.' Without additional explanation regarding 'non-self,' such a request does not straightforwardly lead to the assertion that 'there is nothing that can be called self.' As the citation illustrates, only the Five Aggregates, characterized by impermanence, are not the self. If the self is considered *solely* as a combination of the Five Aggregates, as presupposed in the doctrine of non-self, then such a self could share the characteristic of impermanence with the Aggregates. However, if the concept of the self in early Buddhism is not exclusively equated with the aggregation of the Five Aggregates, then the possibility of assuming a true self beyond them remains open. Thus, the emergence of the not-self interpretation may not be an unfounded exaggeration or distortion of Buddha's teachings on the Aggregates. Despite challenges from the not-self interpretation, contemporary interpretations of the self in early Buddhism predominantly recognize the non-self doctrine as the standard representation of the early Buddhist understanding of the self. However, regarding the debate between non-self and not-self, some scholars point out that the existence or non-existence of the self was not an essential issue for the Buddha. According to this view, the Buddha's primary concern was the practical goal of liberating sentient beings from suffering due to futile

²⁷³ “世尊告諸比丘：「當觀色無常。如是觀者，則為正觀。... 如是觀受、想、行、識無常。如是觀者，則為正觀。... 如觀無常，苦、空、非我亦復如是。」” The *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經), T.02.0099.0001a07-15.

attachments, and the self as an aggregation of the Five Aggregates was just one case among many impermanent phenomena, without assigning significant emphasis to the self itself.²⁷⁴ This argument seems to weaken the validity of debates surrounding the interpretations of 'non-self' and 'not-self.'

The discourses surrounding the concept of the self in early Buddhism can be summarized as follows: 1) The concept of the self encompasses ontological, epistemological, and practical aspects of Buddhism and should be considered one of the most significant notions developed since the emergence of Buddhist tradition. The misperception of the self is the root of all suffering, and it also logically presents the necessity for practice and liberation. The correct understanding of the self explains how practices should be conducted to escape suffering, ultimately pointing towards the objective of these practices. 2) The concept of the self in early Buddhism, despite its comprehensiveness and significance, gives rise to complex philosophical issues, such as the problem of personal identity. The debates surrounding these philosophical issues are not exclusive to modern Buddhist scholars. Concerns regarding the internal consistency of the concept of the self were already raised during the era of early Buddhism and were further solidified during the period of sectarian Buddhism. Despite this intellectual historical background, the complexity of the concept of the self in early Buddhism can be said to have served as one of the catalysts leading to the emergence of new notions of the self, either replacing or supplementing it in the development of Buddhist tradition.

²⁷⁴ For instance, this argument can be found in the following paper: Jimyeong Kim, “대승 [대반열반경]의 자아관 [The View of Self in Mahayana *Maha parinirvana Sutra*],” *Journal for Buddhist Studies* 49 (2016): 260.

3.3 The Appearance of Tathāgatagarbha Thought and the Concept of Unconditional Self: The Philosophical Self

According to Yasuaki Nara, the doctrine of karmic retribution and reincarnation, although not originally a Buddhist concept but a prevalent folk belief in India, led to philosophical contradictions when combined with the Buddhist teaching of non-self. Nevertheless, the concept of reincarnation was not rejected; instead, it became a crucial part of the teaching and philosophically elaborated over time. A significant aim in the Indian Buddhist tradition was to bridge the gap between the teaching of non-self and the subject of reincarnation. This effort continued through early Buddhism, sectarian Buddhism, and into Mahāyāna Buddhism. Particularly in the period of sectarian Buddhism, within the Abhidharma philosophy, various concepts such as *Alāya-vijñāna* (根本識), *Bhavāṅga* (有分識), *Pudgala* (補特伽羅), and *Ekarasa-skandha* (一味蘊) were proposed as notions representing the subject of reincarnation.²⁷⁵

This endeavor to resolve the contradiction between the teaching of non-self and the concept of karmic retribution and reincarnation led to another interpretative trend in the Indian Mahāyāna tradition: the emergence of Tathāgatagarbha thought. Tathāgatagarbha, combining Tathāgata (the thus-gone one, referring to the Buddha) and *garbha* (womb or embryo), generally means 'the womb or embryo of the Tathāgata.'²⁷⁶ 'Tathāgata' is the foremost among the ten

²⁷⁵ Yasuaki Nara assesses that with the advent of the notion of *Alāya-vijñāna* in the Yogācāra tradition, efforts to resolve the logical contradiction between the doctrine of non-self and the subject of reincarnation were finally culminated. For an examination of this logical contradiction between the two concepts in the Indian Buddhist tradition, see Yasuaki Nara, “仏教からみた私・自我・靈魂 (The Self, Ego, and Soul from a Buddhist Perspective),” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 36 (2012): 300-302.

²⁷⁶ Byounggeun Ahn, "자아에 대한 불교의 관점과 그 시사점 [The Buddhist View of the Self and Its Implications]," *Journal of Education Studies* (教育論叢) 51, no. 2 (2014): 94; According to KiSun Kang, the Sanskrit term *garbha* was derived from *grbh* (or *grh*), which means "to seize." See Kisun Kang, “중국불교사상에 나타난 불성의 변천과 여러장적 해석: [화엄경] 「여래출현품」과 「보왕여래성기품」을 중심으로 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as

epithets of the Buddha (如來十號). In Buddhist scriptures, it refers to the historical figure Siddhārtha Gautama, as well as the ultimate truth itself, either as the Dharma-body (法身) or as the truth of Suchness (眞如), and it also denotes an enlightened practitioner. Correspondingly, the Sanskrit compound 'tathāgatagarbha' etymologically has two possible interpretations. One interpretation is as 'tathā+gata,' meaning 'the thus gone one,' which refers to 'a transcendent buddha thus gone.' The other is as 'tathā+āgata,' meaning 'the thus come one,' representing 'an immanent buddha thus come.'²⁷⁷ In Tathāgatagarbha thought, the concept encompasses both meanings. However, since it is often expounded in relation to sentient beings who are yet to attain enlightenment through practice, the latter meaning is more emphasized. When using the term *garbha* to represent the *self*, it is understood as a vessel containing the nature of the Tathāgata, thus attributing a positive ontological significance to the notion of 'self.'²⁷⁸

3.3.1 The Formation of Tathāgatagarbha Thought and Its Transmission to China

Tathāgatagarbha thought emerged as one of the three major traditions within Mahāyāna Buddhism, beginning its systematization around the 2nd century CE and subsequently spreading to East Asian countries. One challenge in tracing the origins of Tathāgatagarbha thought is the

Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China: Focused on *Yeoraechulhyeonpum* and *Bowangyeoraesunggipum* of Avatamsaka Sutra],” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 32.

²⁷⁷ For more information on the two interpretations of the term "Tathāgatagarbha," see Douglas Duckworth, "Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism," in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 235.

²⁷⁸ Boram Park, “나를 바라보는 두 시각, 여래출현과 여래장 [Two Perspectives on ‘I’: the Manifestation of the Tathāgata and Tathāgatagarbha],” *Critical Review for Buddhist Studies* 10 (2011): 96.

absence of a singular philosophical figure representing it, in contrast to Madhyamaka or Yogācāra, which were theoretically structured by eminent masters like Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, respectively. According to Bhikkhu Wonkyung, one of the early seminal scriptures of Tathāgatagarbha thought, the *Foxing lun* (佛性論), is attributed to Vasubandhu. However, given Vasubandhu's significant influence on the establishment of the Yogācāra tradition and the integration of Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra elements in the treatise, it remains unclear whether he intended to present Tathāgatagarbha as an independent philosophical tradition. Furthermore, many other important Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises either lack extant Sanskrit originals or their authorship remains unclear. For example, the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* (*Shengman jing* 勝鬘經), one of the oldest Tathāgatagarbha scriptures, is cited in parts of the Sanskrit version of the *Baoxing lun* (寶性論, *Uttaratantra*), but its Sanskrit original and the initial Chinese translation are not extant.²⁷⁹ The *Baoxing lun*, another key text of Tathāgatagarbha thought, exists in its Sanskrit version, affirming its composition within the Indian Mahāyāna context. However, the authorship of the *Uttaratantra*, attributed to Jianhui (堅慧), remains enigmatic. The relationship between Jianhui and Sthiramati (安慧), whether they are the same individual or different contemporaries, is not well-documented, leaving Jianhui's life and identity largely unknown.²⁸⁰ Moreover, the authorship of the *Qixin lun*, traditionally ascribed to Āsvaghoṣa (馬鳴), has been controversial, with many contemporary scholars viewing it as an

²⁷⁹ Diana Y. Paul, trans., *The Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar and The Vimalakīrti Sutra* (Moraga, CA: BDK America, Inc., 2004), 5-6.

²⁸⁰ For further reading on the challenges in tracing the origins of the Tathāgatagarbha thought, see Wonkyung, “여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the ‘Tathāgata-garbha Thought],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 29 (2001): 165-166.

apocryphal text of Chinese origin. The doubts surrounding the authorship of the *Qixin lun* are also related to the absence of its Sanskrit original and the lack of references to such an original text.²⁸¹

One perspective on the origins of Tathāgatagarbha thought involves tracing its philosophical roots to the concept of "the inherently pure nature of the mind, with afflictions as adventive defilements (心性本淨 客塵煩惱)" found in the sectarian Buddhist traditions. This approach seems to stem from the observation that Tathāgatagarbha is typically depicted as having an intrinsically pure nature. However, as Bhikkhu Wonkyung points out, this connection encounters a significant problem: while the concept of "the inherently pure nature of the mind, with afflictions as adventitious defilements" explains the aspect of unconditionality, which is a key facet of Tathāgatagarbha, it falls short of encompassing the aspect of Buddha-nature as a cause (因) that brings about the complete merit of the Dharma-body (性功德), or the aspect of non-emptiness (不空) of Tathāgatagarbha.²⁸² Moreover, this concept is a universal statement found not only in Tathāgatagarbha thought but also in other Mahāyāna traditions like Madhyamaka, making it difficult to assert that it is the definitive origin of Tathāgatagarbha thought.

In Buddhist literature, the first appearance of the term 'Tathāgatagarbha' is reportedly found in the first volume of the *Chengyi ahan jing* (增一阿含經, *Ekottara Āgama*), specifically in the section known as *Xupin* (序品). Here, it is stated, "If one holds the *Chengyi ahan jing* with a

²⁸¹ Francesca Tarocco, "Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings," *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 325.

²⁸² Wonkyung, "여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the 'Tathāgata-garbha Thought]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 29 (2001): 161.

single-minded heart, it is equivalent to possessing the entire Tathāgatagarbha."²⁸³ This phrase appears to consider Tathāgatagarbha as a goal of practice. However, according to Kisun Kang, not only in this part of the *Chengyi ahan jing* but also in other *Ahan* scriptures, there is no explanation characterizing the features of Tathāgatagarbha. Therefore, it seems problematic to trace the philosophical origins of Tathāgatagarbha thought, characterized by the potential for awakening (因), to the *Ahan* texts, based solely on the use of the same term. Regarding the timeline of the establishment of Tathāgatagarbha thought, Kisun Kang argues that while this philosophical feature does not appear in Nāgārjuna's writings, it is often referenced in treatises discussing Yogācāra philosophy. This suggests that Tathāgatagarbha thought emerged as a 'second-wave' of Mahāyāna philosophy, following the initial wave centered on the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy.²⁸⁴

Determining the timeline for the composition of various Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises is yet another significant challenge. One alternative approach is to trace the timeline of their Chinese translations, indirectly inferring the composition dates of their Indian originals (if such originals exist). This method assumes that the original texts in India were composed at different times and entered China roughly in the order they were written, thus it cannot be considered entirely accurate. However, in situations where the bibliographic details of the originals are unclear, this might be the most effective approach available. Citing Kōkan Ogawa's (小川 弘貫, 1905-1974) three stages of the formation of Tathāgatagarbha literature, Bhikkhu

²⁸³ “其有專心持增一，便為總持如來藏。” The *Chengyi ahan jing* (增一阿含經), T.02.0125, 0550c3.

²⁸⁴ For further details on the usage of 'Tathāgatagarbha' in the *Āgamas* and the timeline of the establishment of Tathāgatagarbha thought, see: Kisun Kang, “중국불교사상에 나타난 불성의 변천과 여래장적 해석: [화엄경] 「여래출현품」과 「보왕여래성기품」을 중심으로 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China: Focused on *Yeoraechulhyeonpum* and *Bowangyeoraesunggipum* of Avatamsaka Sutra],” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 32.

Wonkyung describes them as follows: 1) The first stage, where foundational Tathāgatagarbha ideas appear, includes scriptures like the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (如來藏經), the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatva-nirdeśa-parivarta* (不增不減經), and the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* (勝鬘經). 2) The second stage, where Tathāgatagarbha thought begins to gain a systematic form, includes treatises like the *Mahāyānadharmadhātvaśāstra* (大乘法界無差別論), the *Uttaratantra* (寶性論), the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* (無上依經), and the *Buddhagotra śāstra* (佛性論). 3) The third stage, showing a mixture or integration of Yogācāra and *Ālaya-vijñāna* elements, prominently features scriptures like the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (楞伽經) and the *Dasheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論).²⁸⁵

These Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises began to be translated into Chinese around the early 4th century, with most translations occurring between the early 5th and early 6th centuries. The Chinese translation of the *Dasheng qixin lun*, particularly the version translated by the Indian scholar Paramārtha (真諦, 499~569) in 553 CE, began to attract attention in the Tang dynasty through commentaries by notable figures such as Wonhyo (元曉, Wonhyo, 671-686) and Fazang (法藏, 643-712).²⁸⁶ Over the centuries, the *Qixin lun* significantly influenced the doctrinal formation of various traditions in East Asia, including Dilun, Tiantai (天台), Huayan (華嚴), and

²⁸⁵ Wonkyung, “여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the ‘Tathāgata-garbha Thought],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 29 (2001): 166-168.

²⁸⁶ Sumi Lee, “동아시아에서의 [대승기신론] 해석의 전개 [An Overview of Acceptance of *the Awakening of Faith* in East Asian Buddhism],” *Journal of Philosophical Ideas* (哲學思想) 60 (2016): 44.

Chan (禪宗).²⁸⁷ This is also evidenced by the fact that there are as many as 173 commentaries on this treatise.²⁸⁸ Therefore, the importance of Tathāgatagarbha thought in the study of Chinese Buddhism is immense.

If one follows the theory of its Chinese authorship, the *Qixin lun* is commonly regarded as a treatise from the third phase of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition (approximately 400-700 CE).²⁸⁹ As one of the central themes in Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises during this era

²⁸⁷ Huanzhen Feng (馮煥珍), “*Dasheng qixin lun fei fojiao ma* 《大乘起信論》「非佛教」嗎—關於「《起信論》非佛教」說的教理學反省 (Is the *Qixin lun* not Buddhist?: A Theological Reflection on the Claim that the ‘*Qixin lun* is Not Buddhist’),” *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* (中華佛學研) 09 (2005): 31-32; also see, Kisun Kang, “중국불교사상에 나타난 불성의 변천과 여래장적 해석: [화엄경] 「여래출현품」과 「보왕여래성기품」을 중심으로 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China: Focused on *Yeoraechulhyeonpum* and *Bowangyeoraesunggipum* of Avatamsaka Sutra],” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 33.

²⁸⁸ Francesca Tarocco, “Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 327.

²⁸⁹ Jakyoun Han, *불교철학의 전개* (Development of Buddhist Philosophy) (Seoul: Yemun Seowon, 2003), 101-106; The early scriptures representing Tathāgatagarbha thought are generally estimated to have been established before the third century and started to be translated into Chinese around the fourth century. Many of these Tathāgatagarbha-related scriptures have lost their Sanskrit originals, with only Tibetan or Chinese translations remaining. Therefore, when the existence of the Sanskrit originals is not indirectly evidenced through intertextual analysis among scriptures, the authenticity of these translations often becomes a subject of debate. This is also the case with the *Qixin lun*. According to records, the *Qixin lun* was initially authored in Sanskrit by the Buddhist scholar Aśvaghōṣa (馬鳴, 100?–160?) who was active around the second century in India, and later translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (真諦, 499–569) around the sixth century. However, questions about the true authorship, whether the original was composed in India or China, have been raised for a long time. The *Zhongjing mulu* (衆經目錄), a catalog of Buddhist scriptures compiled in 594 during the Sui (隋) Dynasty, contains assessment that questions whether the *Qixin lun* was genuinely a translation by Paramārtha. Additionally, in the seventh century, the Baekje (百濟) scholar Hyegyun (慧均) in his *Daeseung saron hyunui ki* (大乘四論玄義記) notes that claims about the *Qixin lun* being authored not by Aśvaghōṣa but by a later master of the Dilun School were already made during the Tang Dynasty. The proclamation of the *Qixin lun* as an authentic Indian text and a true teaching of the Buddha was not made until 730 by Zhi Sheng (智昇) in his compiled catalog of Buddhist scriptures, the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (開元釋教錄). The debate over the authenticity of the *Qixin lun* continues into the modern era, with various opinions presented since the early twentieth century. Currently, the view that considers the *Qixin lun* a Chinese composition is widely accepted, but these claims are mostly speculative, and a definitive conclusion about the authorship of the *Qixin lun* has not been reached. Despite these contentious elements, the importance of the *Qixin lun* in the East Asian Buddhist tradition seems undiminished. For discussions on the debates surrounding the authenticity of the *Qixin lun*, refer to the following papers: Francesca Tarocco, “Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 325-327; Sumi Lee, “동아시아에서

was the issue of 'subject,' the *Qixin lun* focuses on embodying the notion of Tathāgatagarbha. This notion emphasizes that all sentient beings inherently possess a pure and universal basis for awakening; the path to awakening involves rediscovering this basis, the Tathāgatagarbha. The *Qixin lun* differentiates itself from previous Tathāgatagarbha scriptures by not merely focusing on the purity of Suchness (or Dharma-body) and its capacity to eliminate impurities, indicative of the potential for awakening. Instead, by adapting and incorporating the *Ālaya-vijñāna* ideas from the Yogācāra tradition, the treatise aims to provide a concrete explanation of how mental impurities arise, interpreting them as cognitive activities. This treatise explicitly states that the mind including Suchness is the very mind of sentient beings (衆生心), highlighting its uniqueness within the Tathāgatagarbha literature.

In the context of Tathāgatagarbha thought as developed in China, the scriptures commonly referred to as the "Threefold Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras" (如來藏三部經) are considered foundational. These include the *Rulaizang jing* (*Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*), the *Buzeng bujian jing* (*Anunātva-apūrṇatva-nirdeśa*), and the *Shengman jing* (*Śrīmālādevī Simhanāda Sūtra*). Additionally, the Chinese version of the *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*) is also regarded as a key scripture encompassing Tathāgatagarbha thought. Among the treatises on Tathāgatagarbha, the *Baoxing lun* (*Uttaratantra*) and the *Qixin lun* are generally considered the most significant texts. To briefly summarize their teachings, the term 'Tathāgatagarbha', translated into Chinese as *rulai zang* (如來藏), seems to focus on the meaning of Tathāgata *being*

의 [대승기신론] 해석의 전개 [An Overview of Acceptance of *the Awakening of Faith* in East Asian Buddhism]", *Journal of Philosophical Ideas* (哲學思想) 60 (2016): 41~44; Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 1-2.

covered by afflictions, using *zang* (藏), which implies hiding or containing something.²⁹⁰ Among the Tathāgatagarbha literature, the scripture first known to use the term *rulai zang* (如來藏) is the *Rulaizang jing*, which is considered the oldest among the aforementioned scriptures.²⁹¹ This sutra reveals the concept of Tathāgatagarbha through nine metaphors, such as a lotus flower (蓮花) and true gold (真金).²⁹² Particularly, the eighth metaphor describes all sentient beings as carrying the embryo of the Buddha, or Buddha-nature, within themselves.²⁹³ This implies a core idea in the Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra: 'All sentient beings inherently possess Tathāgatagarbha, making them identical to the Buddha in this respect. This pure Tathāgatagarbha, though obscured by afflictions,

²⁹⁰ In the Chinese tradition of Tathāgatagarbha thought, which developed after the *Rulaizang jing*, the meaning of Tathāgatagarbha is generally interpreted with a focus on the concept of the 'hidden Tathāgata'. For instance, according to the explanation in the *Foxing lun*, the Tathāgata is not apparent due to being obscured by afflictions, hence it is referred to as *rulai zang* (*zang* meaning repository), not *rulai*. Moreover, because sentient beings are unable to see this hidden Tathāgata, it is also termed as *yinfu zang* (隱覆藏), which means the 'hidden or concealed repository'. See “二隱覆為藏者，如來自隱不現，故名為藏。” Vasubandhu (天親), *The Foxing lun* (佛性論), T.31.1610.0796a19-20.

²⁹¹ According to Sengyou's (僧祐) *Chu sanzang ji ji* (出三藏記集), the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* underwent a total of four translations into Chinese. The first of these was done during the reign of Emperor Hui (惠帝, 290-306) of the Western Jin Dynasty (西晉). This initial translation was a collaborative effort by the monks Fali (法立) and Fage (法炬), resulting in the *Fuzang fangdeng jing* (佛藏方等經), comprising four parts and twelve volumes. Unfortunately, both the original Sanskrit version of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* and this first Chinese translation by Fage have been lost. However, Tibetan versions and later Chinese translations still exist. In the 5th century, a translation was made by Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅, 359-429 CE), named the *Dafangdeng rulaizang jing* (大方等如來藏經). In the 8th century, another translation was completed by Amoghavajra (不空, 704-774 CE), and this version was named the *Dafanguang rulaizang jing* (大方廣如來藏經). Based on the absence of the term 'Tathāgatagarbha' in the writings of Nāgārjuna and the translations by Kumārajīva, Bhikkhu Wonkyung speculates that the original Sanskrit Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra was likely composed in India sometime between the mid-third and early fourth centuries. See Wonkyung, “여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the ‘Tathāgata-garbha Thought],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 29 (2001): 167-168.

²⁹² See Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., *Dafangdeng rulaizang jing* (大方等如來藏經), T.16.0666.0457b23-459b12.

²⁹³ 「復次善男子！譬如女人貧賤醜陋，眾人所惡而懷貴子，當為聖王王四天下；此人不知經歷時節，常作下劣生賤子想。如是善男子！如來觀察一切眾生，輪轉生死受諸苦毒，其身皆有如來寶藏，如彼女人而不覺知。是故如來普為說法，言：『善男子！莫自輕鄙，汝等自身皆有佛性，若勤精進滅眾過惡，則受菩薩及世尊號，化導濟度無量眾生。』」 Ibid., T.16.0666.0459a7-459a14.

shines consistently from the time of being obscured to the attainment of Nirvāṇa. The *Danban niepan jing*, translated by Huiyan (惠嚴), incorporates and builds upon various metaphors found in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, presenting the following explanation:

O virtuous man (善男子), there was a pot of pure gold buried within the house of a poor woman, unknown to all her household members, both adults and children. A wise man of skillful means (善知方便), approached the poor woman and proposed, 'I will pay you to gather grass for me.' The woman replied, 'I cannot do so, but if you show my son the pot of pure gold, I will do your bidding.' The man assured, 'I can show your son the pot of gold.' The woman, skeptical, questioned, 'How can you know of it when none in my household does?' The man insisted, 'I have a way of knowing.' The woman, intrigued, requested, 'I would like to see it too, then.' Consequently, the man unearthed the pot of gold from her house. On seeing it, the woman was overjoyed and revered the man with wonder.

O virtuous man, the Buddha-nature of sentient beings is similar. All sentient beings are unaware of it, just as the poor people were unaware of the pot of pure gold in their house. Virtuous man, I now show all sentient beings the Buddha-nature that has been obscured by afflictions, much like the poor people who could not see the pot of gold in their own house. The Tathāgata today shows all sentient beings the repository (藏) of the original awakening (本覺) within them, which is the Buddha-nature. Seeing this, all sentient beings will joyfully take refuge in the Tathāgata. 'Skillful means' (善方便) here refers to the Tathāgata, the poor woman represents all sentient beings, and the pot of pure gold symbolizes the Buddha-nature.²⁹⁴

The concept of Tathāgatagarbha as a 'hidden repository' can be said to characterize the initial stage of Tathāgatagarbha thought, defined as the potential for awakening. It describes the pure Buddha or Buddha's realm as *hidden* within the mundane world of sentient beings, addressing the nature of sentient existence and the relationship between sentient beings and the Buddha.

²⁹⁴ “「善男子！如貧女人舍內多有真金之藏，家人大小無有知者。時有異人善知方便，語貧女言：『我今雇汝，汝可為我耘除草穢。』女即答言：『我今不能。汝若能示我子金藏，然後乃當速為汝作。』是人復言：『我知方便，能示汝子。』女人答言：『我家大小尚自不知，況汝能知？』是人復言：『我今審能。』女人答言：『我亦欲見，并可示我。』 是人即於其家掘出金藏。女人見已，心生歡喜，生奇特想，宗仰是人。「善男子！眾生佛性亦復如是，一切眾生不能得見，如彼寶藏，貧人不知。善男子！我今普示一切眾生所有佛性為諸煩惱之所覆蔽，如彼貧人有真金藏不能得見。如來今日普示眾生諸覺寶藏，所謂佛性。一切眾生見是事已，心生歡喜，歸仰如來。善方便者，即是如來；貧女人者，即是一切無量眾生；真金藏者，即佛性也。」 Huiyan (惠嚴), ed., *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0648b9-26.

Thus, this early notion of Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature can be seen as providing early insights into the relationship between the transcendent (Nirvāṇa) and the mundane world (Saṃsāra), a key theme in the later development of Tathāgatagarbha thought. This emphasis on Tathāgatagarbha as a 'hidden repository' is also found in other related texts. For example, the *Baoxing lun* continues the nine metaphors from the *Rulaizang jing*, such as gold in a dirt heap, to explain this relationship.²⁹⁵ Additionally, the *Yangjuemoluo jing* (央掘魔羅經, *Āṅgulimāla Sūtra*), translated by Buddhahadra, states:

Just as oil cannot mix with water, so the limitless afflictions are merely covering the nature of the Tathāgata. The Buddha-nature cannot be tainted by these afflictions. This Buddha-nature, dwelling within afflictions, is like a lamp inside a vessel; when the vessel breaks, the light appears. The vessel symbolizes afflictions, and the lamp represents Tathāgatagarbha. ... When the sun and moon are covered by dark clouds, their light does not shine through, but when the clouds disperse, their brightness becomes visible. Similarly, Tathāgatagarbha is obscured by afflictions; its nature does not shine brightly. Once free from these afflictions, its great luminosity spreads far and wide, just like the sun and moon, revealing the Buddha-nature in its bright and pure form.²⁹⁶

In relation to practice, the concept of Tathāgatagarbha encompasses two core propositions that later became common in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. Firstly, all sentient beings inherently

²⁹⁵ Douglas Duckworth, "Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism," in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 235.

²⁹⁶ “如油雜水不可得，如是無量煩惱覆如來性，佛性雜煩惱者無有是處，而是佛性煩惱中住。如瓶中燈瓶破則現，瓶者謂煩惱，燈者謂如來藏。... 譬如日月密雲所覆光明不現，雲翳既除光明顯照。如來之藏亦復如是，煩惱所覆性不明顯，出離煩惱大明普照，佛性明淨猶如日月。” Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., the *Yangjuemoluo jing* (央掘魔羅經), T.02.0120.0526b22-c3; While the metaphor comparing Tathāgatagarbha to the sun and moon is relatively less common in Tathāgatagarbha scriptures, the passage quoted from the *Yangjuemoluo jing* aptly illustrates the characteristics of Tathāgatagarbha being obscured by afflictions. The cited passages are from the Chinese translation by Buddhahadra, who also translated the *Dafangdeng rulaizang jing*. The *Yangjuemoluo jing*, containing the story of how Buddha converted the cruel bandit Āṅgulimāla (央掘魔羅), who had been misled by his teacher into killing over a hundred innocent people and collecting their fingers, originally belongs to the early scriptures within the *Āgama* literature. The establishment of the *Āgamas* predates the emergence of Tathāgatagarbha thought, and the original *Āṅgulimāla Sūtra* likely had no direct connection with Tathāgatagarbha thought. However, given that Buddhahadra had experience translating other Tathāgatagarbha-related documents, it cannot be ruled out that explanations related to Tathāgatagarbha thought might have been incorporated during his translation of this scripture.

possess the potential for final awakening, and secondly, this potential remains unrealized due to being obscured by afflictions. According to the *Shengman jing*, Tathāgatagarbha can be defined as the Dharma-body obscured by the afflictions.²⁹⁷ This scripture reveals the non-empty (不空) nature of Buddha-nature through concepts of the Buddha's wisdom and the inherent virtues of merit, emphasizing that the wisdom of the Mahāyāna is the true reality.²⁹⁸ According to this definition, Tathāgatagarbha is intrinsically pure and never tainted by afflictions. The *Buzeng bujian jing* further explores the relationship between Tathāgatagarbha and afflictions, clarifying that although they coexist, they are not fundamentally congruent. It also states that Tathāgatagarbha inherently contains all the virtues of countless Buddhas.²⁹⁹ Similarly, the *Rulaizang jing* describes Tathāgatagarbha's nature in terms of wisdom, virtues, and purity.³⁰⁰ The Tathāgatagarbha teachings, as characterized in these foundational scriptures, are extensively synthesized and systematized in the *Baoxing lun*, leading to a doctrinal culmination.³⁰¹ However,

²⁹⁷ “如是如來法身不離煩惱藏，名如來藏。” Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., the *Shengman jing* (勝鬘經), T.12.0353.0221c10-11.

²⁹⁸ For further reference on the summarized descriptions of the "Threefold Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras" as discussed above, please see the following source: Jungbon, “『보성론』의 경전 인용구의 여러사상에 대한 소고 (A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha Concept in the *Baoxing lun* through Its Scriptural Citations),” *석림* (釋林) 39 (2005): 319-320.

²⁹⁹ “「舍利弗當知，如來藏本際相應體及清淨法者，此法如實不虛妄，不離不脫智慧清淨，真如、法界、不思議法，無始本際來，有此清淨相應法體。舍利弗，我依此清淨真如、法界，為眾生故，說為不可思議法自性清淨心。舍利弗當知。如來藏本際不相應體。及煩惱纏不清淨法者。此本際來離脫不相應煩惱所纏不清淨法。唯有如來菩提智之所能斷。舍利弗。我依此煩惱所纏不相應不思議法界。為眾生故說為客塵煩惱所染。自性清淨心不可思議法。」 Bodhiruci (菩提流支), trans., the *Buzeng bujian jing* (不增不減經) T.16.0668.0467b25-c06.

³⁰⁰ “From the perspective of the Buddha's eyes, although all sentient beings are immersed in various afflictions such as greed, hatred, and delusion, they possess the wisdom of the Tathāgata, the eyes of the Tathāgata, and the body of the Tathāgata, remaining steadfast and unmovable in meditation. O virtuous man, despite all sentient beings existing within the body of afflictions in numerous worlds, they possess the Tathāgatagarbha, which is always untainted and endowed with virtues. They are like 'me' and there are no difference between us. (我以佛眼觀一切眾生，貪欲恚癡諸煩惱中，有如來智、如來眼、如來身，結加趺坐儼然不動。善男子！一切眾生雖在諸趣，煩惱身中有如來藏，常無染污、德相備足，如我無異。)” Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., *Dafangdeng rulaizang jing* (大方等如來藏經), T.16.0666.457b.

³⁰¹ The *Uttaratantra* exists in various versions including the original Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese translations.

as Park Boram points out, the conception of Tathāgatagarbha in these early scriptures remains limited to implying the latent potential for practice and Nirvāṇa, and does not seem to extend to an ontological dimension.³⁰²

As we approach the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (楞伽經), we observe a partial fusion of Tathāgatagarbha thought with the Yogācāra notion of *Ālaya-vijñāna*. Concepts such as the transformation of consciousness play a significant role in expanding the understanding of Tathāgatagarbha from a mere practical dimension to an ontological foundation addressing the issues of birth, death, and Nirvana.³⁰³ A more comprehensive form of Tathāgatagarbha thought, including the concept of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, seems to have been established by the time of the *Qixin lun*. While this idea of dependent origination is well explained in the *Qixin lun*, the term "dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起)" first appears in Fazang's commentary on the *Qixin lun*, the *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記).³⁰⁴ This later form of Tathāgatagarbha thought appears to be completed by incorporating

Among the Chinese translations, the version translated by Bodhiruci has been lost, while the version translated by Ratnamati in 511 CE, known as the *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun* (究竟一乘寶性論), is extant. Regarding the authorship of the treatise, there are theories attributing it to Sthitamati (安慧) or Asaṅga (無著), but the exact author remains uncertain. For more information on the Chinese translations and authorship of the *Uttaratantra*, refer to the following sources: Jungbon, "『보성론』의 경전 인용구의 여래사상에 대한 소고 (A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha Concept in the *Baoxing lun* through Its Scriptural Citations)," *석림* (釋林) 39 (2005): 321-322; The *Uttaratantra* is highly regarded as a treatise that adeptly summarizes and synthesizes the core teachings of the "Threefold Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras". Indeed, in the *Uttaratantra*, many passages from these three foundational sutras and other Tathāgatagarbha-related scriptures are extensively quoted. For a detailed examination of the instances where Tathāgatagarbha scriptures are cited in the *Uttaratantra*, refer to the following sources: *Ibid.*, 324-361.

³⁰² Boram Park, "나를 바라보는 두 시각, 여래출현과 여래장 [Two Perspectives on 'I': the Manifestation of the Tathāgata and Tathāgatagarbha]," *Critical Review for Buddhist Studies* 10 (2011): 98-99.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁰⁴ Fazang's *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記) was significantly influenced by Wonhyo's *Gishinron so* (起信論疏). This influence is evident in the many passages that *Yiji* borrows directly from *So*. However, it appears that the

Yogācāra epistemology, as evidenced by attempts in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and *Qixin lun* to equate the concept of Tathāgatagarbha with *Ālaya-vijñāna*. Such attempts are not found in earlier texts like the *Rulaizang jing* or the *Shengman jing*. In the literature of Chinese Buddhist traditions, the translation of *Ālaya-vijñāna* appears in two forms. While the translated terms *alaiye shi* (阿賴耶識) and *aliye shi* (阿梨耶識) both refer to the same Sanskrit term *Ālaya-vijñāna*, they are conceptually distinct. In the *Qixin lun*, *aliye shi* represents an aspect of Tathāgatagarbha as the combined nature of truth and illusion.³⁰⁵ When freed from the afflictions, Tathāgatagarbha, suchness, and the Dharma-body are proper expressions to refer to the nature of mind.³⁰⁶ The term

term "dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起)" does not yet appear in Wonhyo's commentary. According to Jiyun Kim, it was Fazang's *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* that exerted a substantial influence on later commentaries on the *Qixin lun* written in the three East Asian countries, such as Zixuan's (子璿, 965-1038) *Dasheng qixin lun shu bixiao ji* (大乘起信論疏筆削記). See Jiyun Kim, "대승기신론 수행신심분의 현대적 해석 [The Modern Interpretation of Faith and Practice of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*]," *불교학보* (佛教學報) 99 (2022): 97; According to Cheonhak Kim, the commentary on the *Qixin lun* by Fazang was also referred to as *Dasheng qixin lun shu* (大乘起信論疏). For instance, it is cited as *Qixin lun shu* in *Yaktam gi* (略探記) by Taehyeon (太賢) of Silla, and as *Zhangzhu Qixin Shu* (章主起信疏) in *Seok hwaeomgyo bunggi wontong cho* (釋華嚴教分記圖通鈔) by Gyunyeo (均如) of Goryeo. Additionally, some Japanese documents also list *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* and *Dasheng qixin lun shu* interchangeably as titles referring to Fazang's commentary on the *Qixin lun*. See Cheonhak Kim, "법장과 종밀 기신론소의 유전과 사상적 상위 [A Study on the circulation of Fazang's *Qixin lun shu* and its Ideological Differences from Zongmi's]," *Journal of Bojo Jinul's Thought* (普照思想) 51 (2018): 84-88.

³⁰⁵ According to Chongsik Chun, Wonhyo and Fazang in their interpretations of the *Qixin lun*, referenced Yogācāra texts such as the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (攝大乘論) and the *Yogācārabhūmi Śāstra* (瑜伽師地論) to elucidate the relationship between *Ālaya-vijñāna* and consciousness in the *Qixin lun*. However, even though the *Qixin lun* borrows terminologies and concepts from Yogācāra, Chongsik Chun asserts that understanding of the *Ālaya-vijñāna* in the *Qixin lun* is fundamentally different from that of Yogācāra philosophy. In the *Qixin lun*, *Ālaya-vijñāna* is described as 'a consciousness (識) that manifests based on the pure Tathāgatagarbha as a result (果) of being afflicted by ignorance.' *Ālaya-vijñāna* is a mixture of Tathāgatagarbha and ignorance, but Tathāgatagarbha retains its purity within *Ālaya-vijñāna*. Thus, *Ālaya-vijñāna* in the *Qixin lun* still inherits the key characteristic of Tathāgatagarbha thought, that is, the inherent purity of Tathāgatagarbha. This is distinctly different from the Yogācāra view of *Ālaya-vijñāna* as primarily a repository consciousness that inherits karmic seeds, emphasizing its role in subjective continuity. See Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교* (The Comparison of the Commentaries of the *Awakening of Faith* by Wonhyo and Fazang) (Seoul: Yehak, 2006), 287-289.

³⁰⁶ The expressions in Chinese Buddhism that represent the purity of Tathāgatagarbha are varied. For instance, in the *Dasheng zhiguan famen* (大乘止觀法門), different names for Tathāgatagarbha are presented, such as *Zixing qingjing xin* (自性清淨心), *Zhenru* (真如), *Foxing* (佛性), *Fashen* (法身), *Rulai zang* (如來藏), *Fajie* (法界), and *Faxing* (法性). See "此心即是自性清淨心。又名真如。亦名佛性。復名法身。又稱如來藏。亦號法界。復名法性。如是等名無量無邊

alaiye shi, originating from the Yogācāra tradition, indicates the repository of seeds (含藏識) that should be ceased to attain Nirvāṇa.³⁰⁷ Consequently, while they share similarities in providing some degree of continuity for the subject of cognition and in addressing the relationship between phenomena and the subjective, their meanings diverge between the traditions, particularly

。 ” Huisi (慧思), *Dasheng zhiguan famen* (大乘止觀法門), T.46.1924.0642a21-23.

³⁰⁷ The notion of *Ālaya-vijñāna* within the Yogācāra tradition, which was established in *Mahāvāyāsamgraha* by Asaṅga's (無着), is generally interpreted as ultimately requiring the cessation of its transformations. However, the exclusive association of *Ālaya-vijñāna* with evanescence is a matter of debate, particularly in relation to the interpretation of *Amala-vijñāna* (無垢識). According to Sungdoo Ahn, within the Shelun lineage (攝論宗) influenced by Paramārtha (真諦), a distinct ninth consciousness, separate from the eighth consciousness (*Ālaya-vijñāna*), is posited and referred to as *Amala-vijñāna*. In this interpretation, *Ālaya-vijñāna* is considered to encompass only the aspects of birth and death. On the other hand, in the Yogācāra tradition, represented by Xuanzang (玄奘, 602-664), a separate ninth consciousness is not posited. Instead, *Ālaya-vijñāna*, when freed from afflictions and purified, is considered as *Amala-vijñāna*, representing the state of absolute purity in the *Mahāmudrā-samādhi* (大圓鏡智). It remains unclear whether the eighth consciousness shares its nature with *Amala-vijñāna* or if *Amala-vijñāna* is not a separate essence but simply refers to the purified wisdom attained when the transformations of *Ālaya-vijñāna* cease.

In relation to this, Xuanzang (玄奘) in his *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論), introduces *amala-vijñāna* (無垢識) as 'another name' for the eighth consciousness. In the commentary on *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論述記), Kuijin (窺基), a disciple of Xuanzang, describes *amala-vijñāna* as being obtained through the 'transformation of the essence (心體) of the eighth consciousness'. Whether we consider this interpretation or the other, it is clear that neither aligns with the concept of *Ālaya-vijñāna* as presented in Tathāgatagarbha thought, which is introduced as an amalgamation of truth and illusion (真妄和合識). The concept of *Ālaya-vijñāna* in Tathāgatagarbha thought is more commonly interpreted as having its philosophical roots in the traditions of Dilun (地論宗), particularly those from the Nandao (南道派) lineage. However, when considering the aspect of *amala-vijñāna*, it is challenging to assert that there is no structural relation between the *Ālaya-vijñāna* concepts in Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought. For the related passages in the *Cheng weishi lun* and its commentary by Kuiji, refer to the following sources: “然第八識雖諸有情皆悉成就，而隨義別立種種名，謂或名心，由種種法熏習種子所積集故；或名阿陀那，執持種子及諸色根令不壞故；或名所知依，能與染淨所知諸法為依止故；或名種子識，能遍任持世出世間諸種子故。此等諸名通一切位。或名阿賴耶，攝藏一切雜染品法令不失故，我見愛等執藏以為自內我故。此名唯在異生有學，非無學位不退菩薩有雜染法執藏義故。或名異熟識，能引生死善不善業異熟果故。此名唯在異生二乘諸菩薩位，非如來地猶有異熟無記法故。或名無垢識，最極清淨諸無漏法所依止故。此名唯在如來地有，菩薩二乘及異生位持有漏種可受熏習，未得善淨第八識故。”

Vasubandhu (世親), trans. by Xuanzang (玄奘), *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論), T.31.1585.0013c07-22; “或名無垢識至所依止故。述曰。唯無漏依。體性無垢。先名阿末羅識。或名阿摩羅識。古師立為第九識者。非也。然楞伽經有九種識。如上下會。此無垢識。是圓鏡智相應識名。轉因第八心體得之。” Kuiji (窺基), ed., *Cheng weishi lun shuji* (成唯識論述記), T.43.1830.0344c9-13; For a brief overview of recent discussions surrounding the understanding of *Amala-vijñāna* in the Shelun tradition, refer to the following sources: Sungdoo Ahn, “진제의 삼성설 해석과 아말라식 [Paramārtha's Trisvabhāva theory and the Concept Amalavijñāna],” *불교연구* (佛敎研究) 42 (2015): 103-106.

regarding the inclusion of specific features of pure dharmas. As will be discussed below, the *aliye shi* in Tathāgatagarbha thought, in contrast to the *alaiye shi* of the Yogācāra tradition, incorporates moral elements through the concept of Threefold Greatness (三大). The Yogācāra tradition's *alaiye shi* is relatively neutral, focusing more on the epistemological analysis than these moral aspects. Douglas Duckworth notes that in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, the concept of *aliye shi*, while borrowing from the Yogācāra understanding of *Ālaya-vijñāna*, extends its meaning to encompass the notion of an 'inherently pure mind.'³⁰⁸

3.3.2 The Concept of the Self in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

The emergence of ideas such as Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature, indicating the subjectivity of the practitioner, marks a new phase in the traditional Buddhist dilemma surrounding the doctrine of non-self (*anātman*).³⁰⁹ A pivotal development in this context is the

³⁰⁸ Douglas Duckworth, "Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism," in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 236-237.

³⁰⁹ The interpretation of the etymology of the term 'Buddha-nature (佛性)' varies, but it is commonly traced back to the root *buddha-dhātu*. According to Jongwook Kim, the root *dhā* in *buddha-dhātu* carries two meanings. The first is as a cause (因) with the sense of 'to produce,' and the second is as a result (果), implying 'to place, to position.' When interpreted in the first sense, *buddha-dhātu* can be understood as the 'cause of becoming a Buddha,' aligning with the concept of *buddha-garbha* (佛藏). In the second interpretation, it refers to 'being of the same lineage or family as the Buddha,' aligning with the concept of *buddha-gotra* (佛姓). The Chinese term for Buddha-nature, *Foxing* (佛性), used in Tathāgatagarbha thought, encompasses both these implications.

Jongwook Kim further suggests that this usage of *dhātu* can also apply to *dharma-dhātu*, often translated as 'realm of dharma (法界).' Similar to the above case, if *dharma-dhātu* is interpreted in the first sense of *dhātu*, it refers to the nature of dependent origination (緣生性, *pratīyasamutpannatva*) as the 'basis that produces all phenomena (法性).' If interpreted in the second sense, it indicates the aggregate of phenomenally arisen dharmas (諸法, *pratīyasamutpanna-dharma*), which can be understood as the 'realm of dharma (法界).' See Jongwook Kim, "무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the

re-adoption of the term 'self' (我, *ātman*) in Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises— a term previously rejected as illusory in the classical interpretations of non-self. This reintroduction of the 'self' ushers in new tensions and debates in the post-Tathāgatagarbha landscape, differing from traditional discussions on personal identity and the controversy around 'non-self' and 'not-self.' These new tensions can be expressed in terms such as 'existence (有) and non-existence (無) of the self' or the 'True Self (真我) and sentient beings' self (衆生我)'. A theoretical foundation for this tension can be found in the *Daban niepan jing*, which states:

The Buddha proclaimed, "O virtuous man, the 'self (我)' is essentially the meaning of Tathāgatagarbha. Every sentient being possesses Buddha-nature, which is the true definition of the self."³¹⁰

Kāśyapa (迦葉) Bodhisattva asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, does the 'self' exist within the twenty five realms of existence (二十五有)?"

The Buddha responded, "O virtuous man, the term 'self' signifies Tathāgatagarbha. The fact that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature is precisely my intent. This 'self' has been obscured by endless afflictions from the very beginning, thus remaining unseen by sentient beings."³¹¹

This explanation indicates that the *Daban niepan jing* equates the concepts of Tathāgatagarbha, Buddha-nature, and the self (我).³¹² However, it elucidates that such a self is hidden within all

Buddhist Concept of Non-self],” *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 120.

³¹⁰ “佛言：「善男子！我者即是如來藏義。一切眾生悉有佛性，即是我義。」 Dharmakṣema (曇無讖), trans., *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0374.0407b9-10.

³¹¹ “迦葉白佛言：「世尊！二十五有，有我不耶？」佛言：「善男子！我者，即是如來藏義。一切眾生悉有佛性，即是我義。如是我義，從本已來常為無量煩惱所覆，是故眾生不能得見。」” Huiyan (慧嚴), ed, *The Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0648b06-09.

³¹² In the *Daban niepan jing*, diverse instances of the concept of the *self* are presented, encompassing terms such as

sentient beings, so the nature of this 'self' remains unknown to them. Similar expressions can be found in the *Baoxing lun*: "Tathāgatagarbha is said to be pure because its own nature is free from all defilements of afflictive and cognitive obscurations (智障). ... Departing from the meaningless discussions of non-self, it is ultimately deemed appropriate to be termed as 'self.'" ³¹³ This passage from the *Baoxing lun* explicitly states that the self is indeed Tathāgatagarbha. Tathāgatagarbha is described as pure, free from the defilements of afflictions, signifying its transcendence from karmic causation and the cycle of birth and death, thus considered to be permanent and unchanging (常住不變).

This interpretation is a complete reversal of the early Buddhist view of the self as an impermanent compound of the five aggregates. The passage even demeans the discourse on non-self as "meaningless discussions (無我戲論)," asserting the view of Tathāgatagarbha as the 'self' to be the ultimate perspective. This shift in the understanding of the self also changes what is considered the highest truth (第一義諦) in the Buddhist tradition. The *Baoxing lun* states: "The sutra says, World-Honored One (世尊), the highest truth is not the futile Nirvāṇa, because,

wo (我), *da wo* (大我), *zhen wo* (真我), *foxing* (佛性), *wu wo* (無我), and *waidao suoyan wo* (外道所言我). Among these, terms like *wo*, *da wo*, *zhen wo*, and *foxing* are employed to denote a positive notion of the self, indicative of the Tathāgatagarbha, whereas *wu wo* and *waidao suoyan wo* are utilized to signify the expedient or misconstrued notion of the self, akin to the concept of *Ātman*. The expressions related to the concept of the self, as depicted in the *Daban niepan jing*, are well-organized and elucidated in the following source: Jimyeong Kim, "대승 [대반열반경]의 자아관 [The View of Self in Mahayana Maha parinirvana Sutra]," *Journal for Buddhist Studies* 49 (2016): 261-275; According to Jimyeong Kim, within these expressions in the *Daban niepan jing*, the concept of the 'Great Self' (大我) is presented as a prerequisite for achieving 'Great Nirvāṇa' (大涅槃, *Mahāparinirvāṇa*). This sutra distinguishes between the notions of Nirvāṇa and Great Nirvāṇa, wherein the former is what ordinary beings and Śrāvakas attain upon realizing the truths of impermanence and suffering. However, such a state of Nirvāṇa still retains remnants of karmic afflictions. In contrast, Great Nirvāṇa, a higher spiritual state, is attainable through the realization and completion of the Great Self, equipped with the eight freedoms (八自在). For a detailed exposition of the Great Self and the eight freedoms, see *Ibid.*, 262-268.

³¹³ “以如來法身自性清淨，離一切煩惱障、智障習氣，故名為淨。... 離無我戲論究竟寂靜，故名為我。” Ratnamati (勒那摩提), trans., the *Baoxing lun* (寶性論), T.31.1611.0830c06-09.

‘World-Honored One, that nature is the Dharma-essence (法體, *svabhāva*), which is unchanging from the past to the future.’³¹⁴ This quoted passage refers to Tathāgatagarbha as the unchanging Dharma-essence, suggesting a shift in the ultimate truth a practitioner should realize and achieve. Instead of the traditional perspectives of existence, including the impermanence of the self, the supreme truth is now understood as the permanent and unchanging Tathāgatagarbha.

However, the transformation in the understanding of the self within Tathāgatagarbha thought does not entirely negate traditional interpretations of the self. In relation to the emergence of Tathāgatagarbha thought and the modification of the understanding of the self, Seongcheol Kim argues that the Tathāgatagarbha tradition attempted to integrate its metaphysical notion of the self with the traditional doctrine of non-self. According to him, this strategy of blending the two notions of the self manifests in four patterns, particularly in texts such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (大般涅槃經) and the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (寶性論): 1) Using Metaphysical Self as a Teaching Method: This approach involves temporarily referring to the originally attributeless (無相) Buddha-nature as 'self' for expedient purposes. However, this does not entail a denial of Buddha-nature but rather designates the term 'self' as a provisional concept, which is empty. 2) Accepting Metaphysical Self While Rejecting Empirical Self: Similar to early Buddhist traditions that negate the empirical self as comprised of the five aggregates, this approach recognizes a metaphysical self as the ultimate foundation of existence, i.e., Tathāgatagarbha. It follows the traditional non-self view but adds a metaphysical dimension to it. This strategy essentially changes the meaning of the highest truth (第一義諦), as illustrated above in both the

³¹⁴ “經中說言：世尊！又第一義諦者，謂不虛妄涅槃是也。何以故？世尊！彼性本際來常，以法體不變故。” Ibid., T.31.1611.0835c3-5.

Daban niepan jing and the *Baoxing lun*. 3) Emphasizing the Ineffability of the Metaphysical Self: This method paradoxically aligns the metaphysical self with the traditional concept of non-self by highlighting its ineffability or inexpressibility. 4) Seeking a Middle Path (中道) Between Extremes of the Self and Non-Self:³¹⁵ This approach involves rejecting both attachment to a metaphysical self and the view of non-self as extreme positions, instead advocating for a Middle Path between them.³¹⁶ These four strategies, overall, presuppose a bifurcation of the self into empirical and philosophical selves. Particularly, the second and third strategies clearly contrast the differences between these two notions of the self.

In analyzing Seongcheol Kim's examination, it becomes evident that contrasting the traditional Buddhist concept of the self with the Tathāgatagarbha interpretation, as explored in Tathāgatagarbha sutras and treatises, is not a complex endeavor. As exemplified in the *Daban niepan jing*, the traditional non-self doctrine in relation to the five aggregates is expressed as follows:

The 'self' of sentient beings is essentially the five aggregates (五陰); apart from these aggregates, there is no other 'self'.³¹⁷

Ajñāta Kauṇḍinya (橋陳如), form (色) is non-self. When form is extinguished, one attains the form of

³¹⁵ In relation to adopting a Middle Path strategy, the *Baoxing lun* states as follows: "The *Shengman jing* states: 'World-Honored One, to see all phenomena as impermanent is a view of annihilation (斷見), not the correct view. To see Nirvāṇa as permanent is a view of permanence (常見), not the correct view. Such views arise from delusion (妄想見).' (《聖者勝鬘經》中說言：世尊！見諸行無常，是斷見，非正見。見涅槃常，是常見，非正見。妄想見故，作如是見故。)" Ibid., T.31.1611.0830c28-831a01.

³¹⁶ Seongcheol Kim, "여래장사상에서 자아와 무아 [Ātman and Anātman in the Tathāgatagarbha Thought]," *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 37 (2013): 118-130.

³¹⁷ "眾生我者，即是五陰，離陰之外更無別我。" Huiyan (慧嚴), ed, *The Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0802c05-06.

liberation's *true self* (解脫真我). The same applies to sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness (受想行識).³¹⁸

In the first of the two quotes mentioned above, the usage of the phrase 'the self of sentient beings' in this context clearly defines sentient beings as entities manifesting in phenomena and composed of these five aggregates (五陰). This articulation upholds the traditional Buddhist view of non-self, by clarifying that the 'self' of sentient beings, being phenomenally manifested, is conditioned and thus impermanent. In Buddhism, this impermanence implies that it will eventually cease to exist. Therefore, neither the 'self' nor its constituent elements/characteristics can be considered as a 'permanent, unchanging self,' leading to the explanation of *anātman*. Recognizing this is essential for the path to Nirvāṇa. The second quote explicitly underscores this point. This interpretation of non-self aligns closely with the views presented in early Buddhism.

In the cited passages from the *Daban niepan jing*, a significant term is introduced: *zhen wo* (真我), or 'True Self'. This sutra elaborates on the True Self that is revealed upon the dissolution of the concept of non-self:

The forms of the five aggregates are creations; like sand or stone, they can be pierced and shattered. However, the True Self, which is the Buddha-nature (佛性), is comparable to a diamond (金剛), unbreakable.³¹⁹

If the heretics from the six schools (六師外道) assert that form (色) is 'self', they err. Why? Because form is genuinely *not* the 'self' (非我) ... This principle also holds for sensation, perception, mental formations, and

³¹⁸ “「橋陳如！色是無我，因滅是色獲得解脫真我之色；受、想、行、識亦復如是。」 Ibid., T.12.0375.0838b22-23.

³¹⁹ “五陰之相即是起作，起作之相猶如石沙，可穿、可壞。佛性真我譬如金剛，不可毀壞。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0649c21-23.

consciousness (受想行識).³²⁰

O virtuous man, the Tathāgata eternally dwells; this is termed the 'self.' The Dharma-body (法身) of the Tathāgata, being limitless and unimpeded, neither born nor perishing, having achieved the eight freedoms (八自在), is referred to as the self.³²¹

In the quoted passages, the concept of 'True Self' is aligned with the notion of Buddha-nature. This is contrasted with the empirical 'self' of sentient beings, which is constituted by the combination of the five aggregates. The True Self, likened to an indestructible diamond, is described as not subject to birth and death, thus transcending the cycle of karmic retribution. As indicated in the quotes, the *Daban niepan jing* clarifies the fallacy of indiscriminately referring to the five aggregates as the self, stating that the aggregates are *not* the 'true self' in the ultimate sense. This suggests the presence of two distinct concepts of the self in this sutra: the self of sentient beings (衆生我) and the True Self. This interpretation highlights the sutra's intentional use of the term 'not-self' (非我) instead of 'non-self' (無我), implying the true self, the Tathāgatagarbha, beyond a composite being of aggregates. Thus, the sutra partially adopts the traditional view of non-self regarding the aggregates while suggesting the True Self, distinct from the *anātman* view in early Buddhism. This perspective on self in *Daban niepan jing*, which incorporates both the concept of non-self and the True Self, reminds us of the tension between 'non-self' and 'not-self' in the interpretation of early Buddhist notion of *anātman*.

If the concept of the 'self of sentient beings' is seen as representing the understanding of

³²⁰ “六師若言色是我者，是亦不然。何以故？色實非我。... 受、想、行、識亦復如是。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0789c14-23.

³²¹ “善男子！如來常住則名為我。如來法身無邊無礙，不生、不滅，得八自在，是名為我。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0802c15-17.

the self in early Buddhism, then the idea of the True Self or Buddha-nature as explained in the *Daban niepan jing* is decidedly not found in the early Buddhist tradition. Whether the authors of the *Daban niepan jing* deliberately used the concept of the True Self, considering this point, is unclear. However, it is evident that the *Daban niepan jing* attempts to justify the idea of the True Self by integrating it with the existing doctrine of non-self, leaving distinct traces of this effort. In relation to this point, the *Daban niepan jing* states:

A Brahmin said, ‘Gautama (瞿曇), in previous scriptures, it has been taught that all sentient beings lack a self. How is this not a view of annihilation (斷見)? If there is no self, then who observes the precepts, and who violates them?’ The Buddha replied, ‘I have not declared that all sentient beings are without a self. I have always taught that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature. How could Buddha-nature not be the self? In this sense, I have not taught a view of annihilation. Because all sentient beings fail to see Buddha-nature, they [accept] impermanence (無常), non-self (無我), no pleasure (無樂), and no purity (無淨). If this is recognized, it is called expounding a view of annihilation.’ Upon hearing this, all the Brahmins developed the mind towards the perfect awakening (*Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi*), realizing that Buddha-nature is indeed the self. They then renounced worldly life to cultivate the Bodhi Path.³²²

O virtuous man, this Buddha-nature is not actually the self. It is referred to as the self for the sake of sentient beings. O virtuous man, the Tathāgata speaks of non-self as self because there are causes and conditions (tailored to specific objects or situations). In truth, it is non-self. Even though it is explained in this way, there is no falsehood. O virtuous man, because there are causes and conditions, the self is spoken of as non-self. But in reality, it is the self (有我). For the sake of worldly people, even though non-self is taught, there is no falsehood. Buddha-nature is non-self, but the Tathāgata speaks of it as the self. This is because it is permanent. The Tathāgata (again) speaks of this self as non-self. This is due to the Tathāgata's unimpeded mastery (in distinguishing between the existence and non-existence of the self.)³²³

³²² “彼梵志言：『瞿曇！先於處處經中說諸眾生悉有無我，既言無我，云何而言非斷見耶？若無我者，持戒者誰？破戒者誰？』佛言：『我亦不說一切眾生悉有無我，我常宣說一切眾生悉有佛性。佛性者，豈非我耶？以是義故，我不說斷。一切眾生不見佛性故，無常、無我、無樂、無淨。如是則名說斷見也。』時諸梵志聞說佛性即是我故，即發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心，尋時出家修菩提道。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0769c03-c12.

³²³ “『善男子！是佛性者，實非我也。為眾生故，說名為我。善男子！如來有因緣故，說無我為我，真實無我。雖作是說，無有虛妄。善男子！有因緣故，說我為無我，而實有我。為世界故，雖說無我而無虛妄。佛性無我，如來說我，以是常故；如來是我而說無我，得自在故。』” Ibid., T.12.0375.0769c13-c20.

In the first of the two quotes mentioned, the *Daban niepan jing* uses Gautama's voice to assert that Buddha-nature is indeed the self and that its permanence, pleasure, selfhood, and purity (常樂我淨) cannot be denied. The second quote reveals an attempt to synthesize the early Buddhist view of non-self with the Tathāgatagarbha, by sometimes referring to the true self, i.e., Buddha-nature, as 'non-self' and at other times as 'self'. The question directed to Gautama in the first quote indicates the ongoing complexity of reconciling the teaching of non-self with the idea of a persistent subjectivity at the time of the sutra's composition. In response, the *Daban niepan jing*, through Gautama's voice, argues that declaring Buddha-nature as impermanent and non-self would constitute a view of annihilation. However, the sutra then asserts that Buddha-nature is originally non-self but is referred to as the self for the sake of sentient beings. It then reiterates that the true nature of Buddha-nature is the self, which is also presented as non-self for the sake of sentient beings. This portrayal of Buddha-nature as both non-self and self might seem contradictory at first glance.

Bhikku Jungbon interprets this as the *Daban niepan jing* adapting the Middle Path view to explain the Tathāgatagarbha concept. According to him, the *Daban niepan jing* suggests that insisting all sentient beings definitely have Buddha-nature could be considered attachment, while completely denying it could be seen as nihilistic. However, it ultimately affirms the ineffable realm of the True Self, positing that all sentient beings can achieve awakening.³²⁴ This means that depending on the capacities and situations of sentient beings at any given time, Buddha-

³²⁴ According to Bhikku Jungbon, a distinctive characteristic of the *Daban niepan jing* is its use of the term 'Buddha-nature' predominantly to denote Tathāgatagarbha, in contrast to the earlier Tathāgatagarbha sutras which do not primarily use this expression. This approach, coupled with the adoption of the Middle Path view, characterizes the *Daban niepan jing* apart from previous texts in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. See Jungbon, “『보성론』의 경전 인용구의 여래사상에 대한 소고 (A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha Concept in the *Baoxing lun* through Its Scriptural Citations),” 석림(釋林) 39 (2005): 320-321.

nature may be referred to as non-self or as self. Such rhetorical expressions are used only for the purpose of teaching and are not essential in themselves. In other words, whether teachings pertain to self or non-self, they are all teachings according to the Buddha's skillful means, thus being equally valid and not mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, he points out that the *Daban niepan jing* still adopts the concept of Tathāgatagarbha as the basis for Nirvāṇa. This interpretation by Bhikku Jungbon aligns with the last of the four strategies in the early Tathāgatagarbha tradition analyzed by Seongcheol Kim. Indeed, the *Daban niepan jing* explicitly states that 'self and non-self are not two different teachings', supporting the interpretation that it adopts the Middle Path view.³²⁵

In contrast to Seongcheol Kim's analysis of the strategies integrating the Tathāgatagarbha concept with the teaching of non-self, the *Daban niepan jing* introduces an additional, significant strategy. It essentially relegates the traditional doctrine of non-self to a provisional status and elevates the concept of the True Self as more fundamental, thereby reversing their positions. While the above-mentioned quote lists both non-self and self as expedient means, other passages in the sutra emphasize that the teaching of non-self is merely provisional:

O virtuous man! In the same way, sentient beings, lacking divine vision (天眼) and mired in afflictions, cannot see for themselves that they possess the Tathāgata's nature. Therefore, I have expounded the secret of non-self. This is because those without divine vision cannot comprehend the True Self and recklessly speculate about 'self.'³²⁶

³²⁵ “O virtuous man, there is no duality in the nature and form of 'self' and 'non-self' ... It is due to the karmic conditions of ignorance that all sentient beings manifest in these two forms. If ignorance transforms, it changes into clear understanding. (善男子！我與無我 性相無二 ... 是諸眾生以明無明業因緣故 生於二相。若無明轉 即變為明。)” Huiyan (慧嚴), ed., *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0651c18-0652a06.

³²⁶ “善男子！眾生亦爾，無有天眼，在煩惱中而不自見有如來性。是故我說無我密教。所以者何？無天眼者不知真我。橫計我故。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0656c13-15.

The Tathāgata has spoken of non-self in the Dharma to subdue (調) sentient beings. Knowing it was not the right time, he spoke of non-self. But upon encountering the right conditions, he finally expounded that there is a self.³²⁷

In the quotes provided, there is an attempt in the *Daban niepan jing* to relegate the teaching of non-self to a mere expedient means for beings of relatively lower spiritual capacities, who lack the divine vision (天眼) and are mired in afflictions. This is because beings not yet deeply cultivated can easily harbor delusions about the self, hence the teaching of non-self is given as an expedient. However, when beings progress in their practice and encounter the right conditions, they are less likely to hold delusions about the self, prompting the Buddha to then expound that there is the true self.³²⁸ The *Daban niepan jing's* stance suggests that if sentient beings were not obscured by ignorance, the Buddha would have directly revealed the True Self. This approach in the sutra clearly emphasizes the view of True Self over non-self.

The attempt to harmonize the view of the True Self with the teaching of non-self as an expedient means becomes more apparent in a metaphor found in the eighth volume of the *Daban niepan jing* (如來性品). In this metaphor, a woman takes her sick child to a doctor, who prescribes medicine and advises not to breastfeed the child immediately after the medicine, but only after it is digested. The mother applies a bitter taste (苦味) to her breast to prevent the child from nursing until the medicine is digested. After the medicine is digested, she cleans her breast and tries to nurse the child, but the child, scared by the previous bitter taste, refuses. Eventually, after the

³²⁷ “如來於佛法中唱言無我，為調眾生故、為知時故，如是無我。有因緣故，亦說有我。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0618c01-03.

³²⁸ For an analysis that views the teaching of non-self in the *Daban niepan jing* as an expedient means to reveal the True Self, refer to the following: Jimyeong Kim, “대승 [대반열반경]의 자아관 [The View of Self in Mahayana *Maha parinirvana Sutra*],” *Journal for Buddhist Studies* 49 (2016): 275-277.

mother reassures the child that the breast has been cleaned, the child gradually approaches and nurses again. The *Daban niepan jing* likens the Buddha's teaching of non-self to the bitter taste applied by the mother. It is an expedient means to break the attachment of beings to the empirical self, misperceived as the true self. Similarly, when the Buddha teaches the True Tathāgatagarbha to sentient beings who have shed the delusion of false understandings of the self, it is like the mother cleaning her breast and offering it again, encouraging them to dispel their fear of embracing the concept of the self and accepting that the profound Tathāgatagarbha is 'not nonexistent (不得不有).'³²⁹ The most notable aspect of this metaphor is that it likens the fear of a child, startled by the bitter taste and hesitant to nurse again, to the fear experienced by a monk who has learned about non-self and is then introduced to the concept of the True Self. Through this metaphor, the *Daban niepan jing* can be seen as clearly stating that the early traditional teaching of non-self is ultimately a temporary teaching that must be surpassed to learn about the True Self.

³²⁹ “「復次，善男子！譬如女人生育一子。嬰孩得病，是女愁惱，求覓良醫。良醫既至，合三種藥——酥、乳、石蜜——與之令服。因告女人：『兒服藥已，且莫與乳。須藥消已，爾乃與之。』是時女人即以苦味用塗其乳，語其兒言：『我乳毒塗，不可復觸。』小兒渴乏欲得母乳，聞乳毒氣便遠捨去。至其藥消，母乃洗乳，喚子與之。是時小兒雖復飢渴，先聞毒氣是故不來。母復語言：『為汝服藥，故以毒塗。汝藥已消，我已洗竟，汝便可來飲乳無苦。』其兒聞已，漸漸還飲。「善男子！如來亦爾，為度一切，教諸眾生修無我法。如是修已，永斷我心，入於涅槃。為除世間諸妄見故，示現出過世間法故，復示世間計我虛妄非真實故，修無我法清淨身故。譬如女人為其子故，以苦味塗乳。如來亦爾，為修空故，說言：『諸法悉無有我。』如彼女人淨洗乳已而喚其子，欲令還服。我今亦爾，說如來藏。是故，比丘不應生怖。如彼小兒，聞母喚已，漸還飲乳。比丘亦爾，應自分別如來祕藏不得不有。」” Huiyan (慧嚴), ed., *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0648b27-c18.

3.3.3 Dichotomization of the Concept of the Self in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

Upon examining the passages about the concept of the self in the *Daban niepan jing*, it is evident that Tathāgatagarbha thought presents a dichotomization of the self concept, diverging from traditional Buddhist teachings. This dichotomy is between the 'conventional self' (假我), constituted by the five aggregates and denied substantiality in traditional non-self teaching, and the 'True Self' (真我), referred to as Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature, which is immutable, transcends the cycle of birth and death, and forms the basis of Nirvāṇa. While the *Daban niepan jing* adopts the Middle Path approach to integrate the concepts of 'non-self' and 'True Self,' the non-self in this context is more an expression denoting the phenomenological ineffability or inexpressibility of True Self, distinct from the provisional self concept in early Buddhism. This becomes apparent in the *Daban niepan jing's* assertion that labeling the aggregate-composed entity as self is erroneous. Therefore, regardless of the validity of the Middle Path perspective in Tathāgatagarbha thought, the conventional self and True Self are inherently contrasting and separate concepts.

In Tathāgatagarbha thought, the understanding of the impermanent self is not significantly different from that in early Buddhist traditions. That is, it is a temporary entity composed of the five aggregates, subject to birth and death due to causes and conditions, and it is therefore still a concept that must be negated. Such a self is considered 'non-self' due to its lack of inherent essence. However, our focus in Tathāgatagarbha thought should be more on the True Self, namely Tathāgatagarbha. Tathāgatagarbha, transcending the cycle of birth and death, does not fall under the traditional concept of non-self. Additionally, Tathāgatagarbha is considered the subject of practice, which is essential for Nirvāṇa, hence it is intentionally distinguished from the

conventional self and referred to as the (True) Self. *The Daban niepan jing* states:

Therefore, it is said that though all dharmas are without self, they are not truly without self. What then is the self? If a dharma is real, true, permanent, subjective, a basis, and its nature does not change, then this is called 'self'.³³⁰

This quote mentions characteristics of the True Self concept, stating it is true, permanent, and unchanging. The self referred to here is distinct from the one composed of the five aggregates and is generally interpreted as having positive attributes. Thus, despite the provisional adoption of the non-self teaching, it is clear that this concept of the self is not negated. While the above quote primarily describes the True Self as true (真) and real (實), another passage in the *Daban niepan jing* adds to these characteristics the four virtues of permanence, bliss, selfhood, and purity (常樂我淨), along with goodness (善), totaling seven attributes.³³¹ Moreover, the *Daban niepan jing* dichotomizes the state of Nirvāṇa, suggesting different depths of awakening based on the type of the self realized. According to this view, the True Self, being different from the self composed of the five aggregates, can be called the 'Great Self' (大我), and the profound realization of this Great Self is termed 'Great Nirvāṇa' (大涅槃).³³² These concepts of the Great Self and Great Nirvāṇa stand in contrast to the 'Nirvāṇa' achieved by understanding the self as the five aggregates. In essence, in Tathāgatagarbha thought, true liberation is about 'realizing the

³³⁰ “是故說言，諸法無我，實非無我。何者是我？若法是實、是真、是常、是主、是依、性不變易者，是名為我。” Dharmakṣema (曇無讖), trans, *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0374.0378c29-0379a03.

³³¹ “如是佛性則有七事：一、常，二、我，三、樂，四、淨，五、真，六、實，七、善。” Huiyan (慧嚴), ed., *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0818a23-24.

³³² “云何復名為大涅槃？有大我故，名大涅槃。” Ibid., T.12.0375.0746b28-29.

True Self (我見).³³³ Considering that the ‘perspective of the self (我見)’ has traditionally been regarded as an wrong attachment to the self, this represents a significant shift in the understanding of the self.

The diversification of the concept of the self and the emergence of the concept of the True Self are among the most significant features in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and some contemporary scholars have defined them in their own terms. For example, Yoshifumi Ueda defines the self in Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy as the non-experiential subjectivity, the "true self," and contrasts this with the "conceptualized self" as an empirical object.³³⁴ Ueda's interpretation shows similarities to the differentiation of the self in Tathāgatagarbha thought as discussed above. Meanwhile, Bose defines Nirvāṇa as a conceptual transformation from a "false understanding of the self" to "the true form of the self," presenting a dichotomized view of the self. According to Bose, the self can be perceived in two different ways depending on the viewpoint: in the "objective mode of thought," the self is constructed through sensory experience and recognized as an independent and self-sufficient reality, while in the "dynamic mode of thought," the self's nature is its conditionality, not fixed and existing in "solidarity" with all other beings in the world.³³⁵ However, Bose's association of these two perspectives of the self with the ultimate and conventional truths (二諦) can be contentious. According to traditional interpretations of these truths, conventional truth is not just limited or wrong knowledge but

³³³ Regarding this point, the *Daban niepan jing* explains: "Realizing self is Buddha-nature, and Buddha-nature is true liberation. True liberation is indeed the Tathāgata. (我見者名為佛性。佛性者即真解脫，真解脫者即是如來。)" Ibid., T.12.0375.0635c09-10.

³³⁴ Yoshifumi Ueda, "The World and the Individual in Mahāyāna Buddhist Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 14, no. 2 (July 1964): 158.

³³⁵ Kurethara S. Bose, "The Transformation of the Self in Mahayana Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist* (New Series) 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 145~153.

plays a role as a part of the truth, serving as an expedient means to convey the ultimate truth of absolute emptiness. Therefore, this conventional truth as an expedient means should not be equated with a "false understanding of the self" that causes suffering for practitioners. While Bose's interpretation might take a somewhat naive approach to these truths, it cannot be entirely dismissed, as spoken teachings can also cause suffering if clung to by practitioners. Also, contemporary Buddhist scholars' definitions of the self found in Buddhist tradition might not always carry the same implications, including the definition to be proposed in this chapter. However, it is important to note that the attempt to categorize the concept of the self into two types in the Mahāyāna tradition is not new, and each attempt has its own textual legitimacy.

In my research here, the concept of the self, as it dichotomizes in Tathāgatagarbha thought, is defined as the 'empirical self' and the 'philosophical self.' Initially, concerning the traditional view of the self presented in early Buddhism, the definition of the empirical self focuses on the point that it is *constituted* through subjective experiences based on the foundation of the five aggregates. While the concept of the five aggregates clearly includes the material components that constitute the self, the reason such a self is considered significant in Buddhist understanding as a source of suffering is due to misconceptions, misunderstandings, and attachments to it: namely, the self is always changing due to conditional factors, but there is a mistaken perception of it being constant and unchanging based on momentary experiences of oneself. However, the self that is perceived and understood as 'I' is always based on my experiential recognition of it at each moment. The elements constituting this experience can be said to be karmic retribution in a Buddhist context, and karma, being produced and disappeared by conditions, is essentially empty. Thus, the individual characteristics and behaviors formed by such dependent origination are also essentially empty. Therefore, it is clear that this self does not

point to anything beyond experience. In this sense, the most important characteristic in defining the self in this traditional perspective is the experience itself of what is believed to be oneself. The concept of the self corresponding to the notion of the person, often used in contemporary philosophy to denote the individual or human being, can also be referred to as this empirical self.³³⁶

In contrast, the concept of the True Self or Great Self, as seen in the *Daban niepan jing*, even though referred to as 'self', is more appropriately viewed as a term denoting the universal *dharmakāya* (法身) rather than the empirical self manifested in phenomena. This is because it is not only beyond experiential recognition or linguistic expression but also transcends dependent origination and possesses persistence, as frequently described in various Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises. Such a self, not manifesting in phenomena, is not considered an empirical object and can only be conceptualized through philosophical reasoning. Therefore, I intend to refer to such a self as the 'philosophical self.'

If such an unchanging self is presupposed, one might ask: "If the self does not change, how can the necessity of practice be explained? Doesn't practice presuppose one's change?"³³⁷

This is a common misunderstanding in the discourse on self in Tathāgatagarbha thought,

³³⁶ In Chinese Buddhist tradition, the concept commonly used to represent an individual is "sentient being (衆生)," also referred to as "*yuqing* (有情)." These terms encompass all life forms with feelings, not just humans. However, as Sally King points out, within Buddhist texts, it is indeed the case that only human beings have been considered special beings capable of achieving awakening. Therefore, King's argument that in discussions about awakening and the practices leading to it, the concept of "sentient being" should be specifically understood as referring to "human beings" or "human individuals" as "persons," is valid. See Sallie B. King, "Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person," *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 156~157.

³³⁷ For example, Jongwook Kim argues that practice presupposes changes in the practitioner's perception and attitude. Therefore, concepts like Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature should be understood merely as expedient means to provide hope that all sentient beings can achieve enlightenment, and that what these concepts signify also cannot escape the nature of non-self. See Jongwook Kim, "무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the Buddhist Concept of Non-self]," *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 120-125.

misinterpreting the concept of True Self as a being manifesting in phenomena.³³⁸ However, it must be acknowledged that simply calling Tathāgatagarbha or similar concepts 'the self' can lead to many rational misunderstandings. When understanding the concept of the self in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, it should be noted that these traditions also clearly dichotomize the self into two dimensions, and the self as the subject of practice, presupposing manifestation in phenomena and subject to birth and death, is closer to the empirical self. If we limit the self to only the subject experiencing suffering in the world and moving towards practice based on weariness to that suffering, then Tathāgatagarbha cannot be called a self. This is because Tathāgatagarbha does not manifest *itself* in phenomena and therefore cannot possess any phenomenological characteristics. Tathāgatagarbha is called permanent in the sense that it is transcendent of conditions and not confined by space and time. Especially according to interpretations of later Tathāgatagarbha treatises like the *Qixin lun*, it is more akin to an *a priori* condition that enables our experiences and perceptions rather than being an object of experience and perception. Therefore, the term 'Transcendental Subjectivity' might be more suitable to describe it than simply 'self.'³³⁹ However, there are three reasons why I describe it as the

³³⁸ A notable example among modern scholars who have critically analyzed the Tathāgatagarbha thought is Shiro Matsumoto's *Dhātu-vāda* theory, which illustrates the confusion in understanding the concept of the self. He characterizes the notion of Tathāgatagarbha in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* as "Dhātu" (realm), "ātman" (self), or "Locus," asserting it as the foundation of all phenomena and therefore *real* (existent). While doing so, he also refers to the concept of the Four Virtues (四德) that define the pure Tathāgatagarbha in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. This description indicates that Matsumoto does not clearly distinguish between the two distinct concepts of the self encompassed within Tathāgatagarbha thought, merely merging them as a single notion in his understanding. See, Shiro Matsumoto, "Critiques of Tathāgatagarbha Thought in Buddhist Philosophy," 駒澤大学佛教學部 研究紀要 [Komazawa University Journal of Buddhist Studies] 55 (1997): 9-11; also see, Shiro Matsumoto, "Critiques of Tathāgatagarbha Thought and Critical Buddhism," public lecture and distributed materials, Divinity School of the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, May 2, 2001, pp. 11-13.

³³⁹ The concept of a universal self, indicated through notions such as the transcendent self or True Self, is not exclusively utilized by scholars focusing on the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions. It is also found in discussions depicting the subjective notion of the self, which reflects upon the cognitive or ontological relationship between the subject and the world. For example, Jakyoungh Han, in her analysis of the notion of the self-reflexive nature of consciousness (自證分, *svasamvedana*) in Yogācāra tradition, utilizes the term "transcendent self" to

'philosophical self' here: 1) It is explained as an epistemological and ontological basis for mediating and manifesting individuality, especially in later Tathāgatagarbha treatises, and 2) Terms like 'metaphysical' or 'transcendental' (whether transcendental or transcendent) overlook the point that it can be philosophically contemplated and observed (觀) in the context of meditation practice, potentially leading to different kinds of misunderstandings. 3) Additionally, the fact that Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises already use the term 'self (我)' to refer to it cannot be ignored.

To elucidate the philosophical characteristics of the concept of philosophical self, examining the discussions within the Western tradition reveals that Descartes' declaration "I think, therefore I am"³⁴⁰ raises the issue of the subject as the foundation of cognition and existence, becoming a core theme in modern philosophy.³⁴¹ While perspectives on the self in

describe the subject that reflexively observes the bifurcation of the ālaya-vijñāna into the aspects of seeing (見分) and appearance (相分). According to her, the empirical self is a self that perceives the phenomenal world, while the self that reflexively becomes aware of such a cognitive relationship is the self-reflexive consciousness (自證分), or the transcendent self. However, she clarifies that this notion of the transcendent self does not imply a being that is entirely separate from phenomena. See Jakyoung Han, “무분별지와 진여 [Non-differentiating Wisdom and the True-Self],” *Korea Journal of Buddhist Studies* 3 (2001): 42.

³⁴⁰ René Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, trans. Valentine Rodger Miller and Reese P. Miller (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, 1982), 5.

³⁴¹ According to Jakyoung Han, the intuition of the mind (self) as the foundation of sensation and thought is already found in Cartesian skepticism. She posits that Descartes' absolute self can be considered equivalent to the True Self or True Mind (眞心) in Mahāyāna Buddhism post-Tathāgatagarbha tradition. However, she cites Kant's critique in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, arguing that Descartes failed to distinctly differentiate the two dimensions of the self and understood his absolute self in opposition to the phenomenal world, thereby relegating it back to the realm of the empirical self. See Jakyoung Han, “절대의 마음’에 대한 동서사유의 비교 [A Comparative Examination of Eastern and Western Thoughts Concerning ‘The Absolute Mind’],” *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 30 (2011): 588–590; In relation to this point, Nakrim Chung points out that although Descartes' self is distinct from the physical body, which is an extended thing (*res extensa*) and can be disintegrated, it does not imply that the self is transcendent or persistent. Descartes posits that the self undoubtedly exists as long as it thinks, perceives, and doubts. However, this also implies that a self that ceases to think no longer exists. Thus, from an ontological perspective, Descartes' self is closer to 'nothingness' than to being. Moreover, Descartes' self is finite and thus always unstable. Nakrim Chung notes that this aligns with Kant's interpretation of Descartes' self not as the *determining* self of Apperception (German: *Apperzeption*), but as the *determinable* self constituted by experience. See Nakrim Chung,

post-Descartes modern philosophy vary, many of these perspectives seem to share an understanding that the activity of thinking or perceiving itself can form a basis for defining human existence.³⁴² Among these, a brief examination of discussions on the self and subjectivity in Kant's philosophy may be particularly helpful in understanding the dichotomized concepts of the self that have emerged in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. For Kant, the subjective experiences, including the recognition of the self, are only possible through experiences of external objects.³⁴³ That is, the empirical self, *believed* to be persistent, exists in a relative relationship with the empirical world of objects, presupposing the existence of these objects and perceptions of them. Therefore, such a self is merely a part of phenomena, constituted by the contingent conditions that form an individual's experience. According to Kant's perspective, which finds the persistence of the empirical self in experiences and perceptions of external objects, Descartes' concept of the self as a thinking entity is merely a 'representation thought to be me.'³⁴⁴ Moreover, all objects we experience and are conscious of are merely conditional phenomena.

“데카르트와 칸트의 주체개념 (The Concepts of Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant),” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 44 (2006): 435-443.

³⁴² According to Heidegger, the etymology of the word 'subject' originates from the Greek *hypokeimenon*. This Greek term means 'that which lies before' or 'that which, as the ground, gathers everything to itself.' Originally, it was not a term exclusively referring to humans. The usage of the word 'subject' to specifically denote humans is a tendency that began with Descartes. See Nakrim Chung, “데카르트와 칸트의 주체개념 (The Concepts of Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant),” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 44 (2006): 433.

³⁴³ Related to this point, Kant describes as follows: “I am conscious of my existence as determined in time. All time-determination presupposes something persistent in perception. This persistent thing, however, cannot be something in me, since my own existence in time can first be determined only through this persistent thing. Thus the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere representation of a thing outside me. Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself. Now consciousness in time is necessarily combined with the consciousness of the possibility of this time-determination: Therefore it is also necessarily combined with the existence of the things outside me, as the condition of time-determination; i.e., the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me.” See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B275-276.

³⁴⁴ Nakrim Chung, “데카르트와 칸트의 주체개념 (The Concepts of Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant),” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 44 (2006): 439.

According to Kant, the foundation enabling both inner sense and external experiences is the “transcendental unity of apperception,”—the self-reflective “I”—which represents the fundamental unified, activity of self-consciousness.³⁴⁵ The term 'transcendental' is used because it is *necessarily* required as a precondition for empirical cognition. This transcendental unity of apperception is neither a phenomenon nor a metaphysical substance. Rather, it is a universal precondition necessary for the fundamental synthesis and unification of our cognition; without it, our cognitive and experiential activities are not explainable. Therefore, the activity of reflective self-consciousness itself, which forms the foundation of the relationship between empirical subject and the external world, should be considered originally spontaneous and active, preceding experience.³⁴⁶ It is an "unknown ground" that, while not being a part of phenomena, rather provides the possibility of the empirical concepts that enable the representation of phenomena.³⁴⁷

Regarding the problem of the self, the transcendental unity of apperception is not situated within space and time and cannot be cognized through intuition. It is not an empirical entity that can be recognized through the categories of thought or what Kant calls the *a priori* categories of the understanding. Instead, it enables the representation of 'I think', thus serving as the origin of space, time, and categories that define phenomena.³⁴⁸ Therefore, it is a "pure, original,

³⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A107.

³⁴⁶ Yongjung Kim, “비트겐슈타인에서 본 칸트의 ‘선험적 주관’의 문제 (Wittgenstein's Perspective on Kant's 'Transcendental Subject'),” *Journal of The Society of philosophical studies* (哲學研究) 40 (1985): 113.

³⁴⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A379-380.

³⁴⁸ Jakyoung Han, "칸트 철학에서 초월자아의 이해 (Understanding the Transcendental Self in Kant's Philosophy)," *Journal of The Society of Philosophical Studies*, Special Volume '칸트와 현대철학 (Kant and Modern Philosophy),' 1995, 183~184; Nakrim Chung also describes Kant's pure apperception as not being an object of experience, but rather as an "active subject constituting phenomena," serving as the origin of space and time. According to Chung,

unchanging consciousness."³⁴⁹ Kant refers to this notion as "pure apperception," "original apperception," or "the transcendental unity of self-consciousness."³⁵⁰ This lies at the foundation of all representational activities by consciousness, being the same underlying unity in all of them. Consequently, it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility or experience. If it were to be called 'self' (German: *Ich*) or subject, it would clearly be a 'transcendental subject' or 'philosophical self,' distinct from the empirical self. In Kantian terms, pure apperception is "the determining Self (the thinking)," while the empirical self is "the determinable Self (the thinking subject)."³⁵¹ The former is the basis that enables cognition, while the latter is an object constituted by being recognized and determined through such activities of consciousness. The former is a premise for the cognition of phenomena but cannot itself be an object of cognition.³⁵²

any attempt to perceive this pure apperception empirically would result in a self-contradiction, as it would mean the source of the constraints of phenomena is bound by the very constraints it creates. The self as transcendental apperception is completely distinct from the empirical self that exists within phenomena and is defined by categories within space and time (German: *substantontologische*). See Nakrim Chung, "데카르트와 칸트의 주체개념 (The Concepts of Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant)," *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 44 (2006): 442-443.

³⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A107.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, B132-133.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, A401-402.

³⁵² According to Jakyoung Han's interpretation, the notion of transcendental self cannot be understood within the dualistic frameworks of materialism or idealism. Instead, it represents the absolute basis that transcends the dualistic opposition of the empirical self (inner phenomenon) and the world (outer phenomenon). Kant's transcendental self is an unrestricted and universal consciousness that does not presuppose distinction from other individual selves. It represents nothing other than indicating its own nature as a transcendental subject.

This concept of Kant's transcendental self was later shared and developed by philosophers like Fichte and Schelling as a fundamental principle encompassing theory and practice. As mentioned, Kant argued that the only possible intuition for humans is sensory intuition, denying the possibility of intuition directed at the transcendental self. Han criticizes this aspect, arguing that Kant's philosophy ultimately acknowledges intellectual intuition directed at the transcendental self. This is because the transcendental self is also the basis of practical action, making it difficult to deny the possibility of practical intuition. Thus, in effect, Kant is seen as recognizing intellectual intuition of the transcendental self. Han's critique appears to be based on a Buddhist perspective that presupposes meditative observation of the True Self as a necessary component in the process of enlightenment. See Jakyoung Han, "칸트 철학에서 초월자아의 이해 (Understanding the Transcendental Self in Kant's Philosophy)," *Journal of The Society of Philosophical Studies*, Special Volume '칸트와 현대철학 (Kant and Modern Philosophy),' 1995, 185~190.

According to Kant, such a pure self is a "wholly empty representation I."³⁵³ Thus, its status as the "permanent logical subject" of all representations cannot be verbally explained.³⁵⁴

While the motivations and methods behind deriving the concepts of the empirical self and the philosophical self may not be identical, the stance on the relationship between these two selves is similarly manifested in Tathāgatagarbha thought through the nuanced conceptualization of 'emptiness' (空, *śūnyatā*).³⁵⁵ The concept of emptiness is generally known to have been used from the early Mahāyāna tradition.³⁵⁶ It represents all beings as dependently originated and therefore inherently 'impermanent,' replacing the concept of non-self from early Buddhist traditions as a key expression of truth in Mahāyāna.³⁵⁷ Thus, the concept of non-self in early

³⁵³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B404.

³⁵⁴ Nakrim Chung, “데카르트와 칸트의 주체개념 (The Concepts of Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant),” *Journal of the new Korean philosophical association* (哲學論叢) 44 (2006): 443.

³⁵⁵ For example, according to Kant, all human cognition is bound by the forms of intuition within space and time and the categories of the understanding. If cognition is claimed to exist beyond these, it should be considered not as a cognition but as an idea. Following this perspective, various descriptive expressions attributed to the concept of Tathāgatagarbha in Tathāgatagarbha thought, such as 'virtues (功德)' and 'wisdom,' would also be nothing more than ideas, no different from illusions. In Kant's concept of pure apperception, there can be no content belonging to phenomena apart from the representational form of 'I exist.' In Kant's concept of pure apperception, there can be no content belonging to phenomena apart from the representational form of 'I exist.' For Kant's views on cognition and ideas, see *Ibid.*, 439-440.

³⁵⁶ The mention of emptiness (Pāli: *Suññatā*) does appear even before the Mahāyāna tradition, though its interpretation might differ from later developments. For example, in the *Sutta Nipāta*, it is stated: “Be ever mindful, Mogharāja, and as empty, view the world, with view of self pulled up, and thus crossed over death—who sees the world like this the King of Death sees not.” However, the concept of emptiness in this context does indicate a perspective of non-self, but it might be challenging to interpret it as 'having no self-nature due to dependent origination.' The referenced quote from the *Sutta Nipāta* can be found in the following source: Laurence Khantipalo Mills, trans., *Sutta Nipāta* (SuttaCentral, 1st ed., 2015), 330.

³⁵⁷ According to Sanghee Han, equating 'non-self' with 'emptiness' is a development that appears alongside the later Mahāyāna Prajñāpāramitā tradition. However, she suggests that this concept of emptiness should not be viewed as unique to the Prajñāpāramitā tradition but rather as an evolution of the non-self concept existing since early Buddhism. This interpretation is based on the presence of Pali terms like *suñña* (as an adjective or neuter noun), *suññatā* (as a feminine/abstract noun), and *suññato* (as a masculine nominative) in the *Nikāyas*, which refer to the emptiness of the self. For a detailed explanation of the meanings and usage of these Pali terms in the *Nikāyas*, refer to the following: Sanghee Han, “초기불교의 중도와 무아, 그리고 공 [*Majjhimā paṭipadā*, *Anattā* and *Sunnatā* in Early Buddhism]”, *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 60 (2019): 14-18.

Buddhist traditions (諸法無我) is often considered equivalent to 'emptiness of all dharmas (一切皆空)' in Chinese Buddhist traditions. Nāgārjuna, in defining emptiness, writes that to be empty means to be dependently originated according to conditions, thus having no self-nature (無自性).³⁵⁸

In the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, as examined in the *Daban niepan jing*, there is a shift in the understanding of the impermanence (無常) in relation to the concepts of Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature. These concepts begin to be seen not as impermanent, but as transcending the laws of dependent origination and thus being permanent and indestructible (常住不滅). To explain this within the traditional framework, Tathāgatagarbha thought introduces the term 'non-emptiness (不空)' along with 'emptiness (空).' The *Shengman jing* describes this as follows: "World-Honored One, the non-empty Tathāgatagarbha (不空如來藏) is surpassing countless aspects, not apart from, not released from, not differentiated from the inconceivable Buddha Dharma (不思議佛法)."³⁵⁹ This passage regards the inherently pure Tathāgatagarbha, which fulfills the inconceivable Dharma, as non-empty. The question then arises: 'What constitutes the Dharma that renders Tathāgatagarbha non-empty?' An initial response in the tradition of Tathāgatagarbha relates to the Four Virtues (四德) of permanence, bliss, selfhood, and purity.

³⁵⁸ In the *Shier men lun* (十二門論), Nagarjuna discusses the concept of emptiness in relation to self-nature (自性). He asserts that if something arises dependent on various causes and conditions, it lacks an inherent self-nature. This absence of self-nature equates to emptiness. See, "若從眾因緣生，則無自性，無自性即是空。如苦空，當知有為、無為及眾生一切皆空。" Nāgārjuna (龍樹), the *Shier men lun* (十二門論), T.30.1568.0166c15-17.

³⁵⁹ "世尊！不空如來藏，過於恒沙不離、不脫、不異、不思議佛法。" Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., the *Shengman jing* (勝鬘經), T.12.0353.0221c17-18.

Citing the explanations from *Shengman jing*, the *Baoxing lun* describes as follows:

Shengman jing states: “World-Honored One, the common people, engulfed in delusory views, wrongly perceive the impermanent as permanent, suffering as pleasure, the non-self as self, and the impure as pure. World-Honored One, even those who know the wisdom of emptiness, such as all Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas (辟支佛), do not correctly perceive the ultimate nature and boundaries of wisdom and the Buddha's Dharma-body. ... World-Honored One, when sentient beings do not harbor distorted views, it is considered the correct view. What does this mean? Only the Dharma-body of the Tathāgata is truly the embodiment of the perfections (波羅蜜) of permanence (常), bliss (樂), self (我), and purity (淨). World-Honored One, if sentient beings correctly perceive the Buddha's Dharma-body in this way, that indeed is the correct view (正見).”³⁶⁰

In traditional early Buddhism, the concepts of permanence (常), bliss (樂), self (我), and purity (淨) originally referred to four misguided perceptions that ordinary beings held about themselves and the world. These misperceptions and the resulting attachment contradicted the principles of emptiness and dependent origination, causing suffering for sentient beings. The above passage from the *Baoxing lun* seems to be quoted from the ‘Chapter on the Inversion of Truth (顛倒真實章)’ of the *Shengman jing*, illustrating the transformation of the meaning of these concepts—permanence, bliss, self, and purity—from representing the deluded views of ordinary beings to expressing the true characteristics of the Dharma-body (法身, *Dharmakāya*). According to this passage, perceiving an aggregation of the five skandhas as permanent, blissful, holding self, and pure undoubtedly reflects a deluded view. This perspective reveals a partial continuation of the negative connotations associated with these concepts in early Buddhism, as seen within the

³⁶⁰ “是故《聖者勝鬘經》言：世尊！凡夫眾生於五陰法起顛倒想，謂無常常想、苦有樂想、無我我想、不淨淨想。世尊！一切阿羅漢辟支佛空智者，於一切智境界及如來法身本所不見。... 世尊！彼諸眾生非顛倒見，是名正見。何以故？唯如來法身是常波羅蜜、樂波羅蜜、我波羅蜜、淨波羅蜜。世尊！若有眾生於佛法身作是見者，是名正見。” Ratnamati (勒那摩提), trans., the *Baoxing lun* (寶性論), T.31.1611.0829b28-c08.

Tathāgatagarbha tradition. However, within the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, moving beyond the ordinary view and embracing the Buddha's teachings transforms the perception of these Four Virtues into a 'right view.' Thus, from the perspective of Tathāgatagarbha thought, these Four Virtues are redefined not as the impermanence of the five aggregates but as the Four Perfections (波羅蜜, *Pāramitās*), revealing the sublime characteristics of the Dharma-body.³⁶¹ The proposition of impermanence (無常), non-pleasure (苦), non-self (無我), and impurity (不淨) is reinterpreted as a perspective of Śrāvakas (聲聞) or Pratyeka-buddhas (緣覺), intended to correct the common misunderstandings of the Four Virtues by ordinary beings. However, even this perspective is considered a misunderstanding of the true nature of the Dharma-body from the standpoint of the Tathāgatagarbha. This recontextualization of the Four Virtues later became the predominant interpretation in the Mahāyāna tradition that developed in East Asia following the Tathāgatagarbha thought.

In the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, while the concept of non-emptiness (不空) has been emphasized as a central element in understanding the self, it appears that the tradition could not disregard or overlook the core Buddhist teaching of non-self, which has been perpetuated through the concept of emptiness. This is likely because the newly formed view of the self within the Tathāgatagarbha could seem incompatible with this fundamental Buddhist teaching. Hence, several Tathāgatagarbha treatises show an attempt to further develop the concept of non-emptiness and integrate it with the traditional concept of emptiness. This means moving from the tendency to regard only the afflictions as empty, to depicting Tathāgatagarbha as both empty and non-empty, thereby expanding the meaning of emptiness. The *Qixin lun* says:

³⁶¹ Scott Hurley, "The doctrinal transformation of twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism: Master Yinshun's interpretation of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine," *Contemporary Buddhism* 5, no. 1 (2004): 36–37.

To differentiate Suchness through language, it has two meanings. What are these two? The first is truly empty because ultimately it is true, and the second is truly not empty because it inherently possesses untainted merits. It is called empty because it is originally not unified with any tainted dharmas. For instance, not like all dharmas, it has no differentiated form and thus does not have a mind that arises and ceases.³⁶²

Suchness (眞如, *Tathātā*), or 'the true nature of reality', is a term used in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, equivalently with Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-nature. As described above, both emptiness and non-emptiness are expressions representing pure Tathāgatagarbha, not merely afflictions. The reason why Suchness is non-empty, as observed in quotes from texts such as the *Baoxing lun*, is because it possesses inherent merits like the Four Virtues. On the other hand, it is described as empty because its pure nature does not engage in dependent origination with the dharmas in phenomena.

When considering the theoretical framework of the *Qixin lun* that explains the birth and death of phenomena based on Suchness from an epistemological perspective, the notion that phenomena are not associated with the pure Dharma implies detachment from human cognition and experience. Therefore, it *cannot be said to exist* within phenomena; from this viewpoint, it is regarded as empty. This notion of emptiness has a different meaning from that in the early Mahāyāna tradition, where entities composed of the five aggregates were called empty because they lacked a permanent and unchanging essence and were subject to birth and death. As can be understood from the definition of emptiness by Nāgārjuna, in early Mahāyāna, 'emptiness' was a term limited to phenomenal objects, that is, objects of dependent origination. This definition of emptiness does not provide any definition for concepts beyond phenomena. Hence, it is clear that the approach in Tathāgatagarbha thought, which defines Tathāgatagarbha as empty based on its

³⁶² “復次，眞如者，依言說分別有二種義。云何為二？一者、如實空，以能究竟顯實故。二者、如實不空，以有自體，具足無漏性功德故。所言空者，從本已來一切染法不相應故，謂離一切法差別之相，以無虛妄心念故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0576a24-29.

characteristics of being empirically inaccessible, does not completely correspond with this traditional definition. In short, the emptiness spoken of in reference to the existence of phenomena and the emptiness spoken of in reference to Tathāgatagarbha have different implications. The former is emptiness as lack of intrinsic nature, while the latter is emptiness as the permanent nature beyond phenomena. The scriptures and treatises of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition utilize both notions of emptiness depending on the context, demonstrating a strategy to harmonize the concept of Buddha-nature's non-emptiness with the traditional concept of emptiness.³⁶³

The depiction of Tathāgatagarbha as both empty and non-empty, a reconciliatory approach, appears not only in the *Qixin lun* but also in the *Baoxing lun*;³⁶⁴ and, the Tathāgatagarbha thought in the *Baoxing lun* is largely inherited from the *Shengman jing*.³⁶⁵ While there may be discrepancies between the *Qixin lun* and earlier scriptures regarding the implications indicated by the concept of emptiness, the concept of Tathāgatagarbha's non-emptiness, attributed to its inherent virtues such as the Four Virtues, appears relatively common.

³⁶³ According to Sallie King, the concept of Buddha-nature, as represented in the *Foxing lun*, is not entirely negative, even though it may be described as emptiness; it holds a positive relation. Therefore, she explains that in the Tathāgatagarbha thought, the concepts of Buddha-nature and emptiness are not incompatible. See Sallie B. King, "Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person," *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 152~153.

³⁶⁴ Douglas Duckworth, "Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism," in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 238.

³⁶⁵ According to the interpretation of the *Shengman jing* by Shunkyō Katsumata (勝又俊教, 1909-1994), the scripture considers the Four Virtues of permanence, bliss, self, and purity as karmic result of Tathāgatagarbha and clarifies that this concept of Tathāgatagarbha does not contradict the teaching of non-self. To distinguish this from the notion of the self in heterodox teachings, terms like 'True Self' (眞我) or 'Great Self' (大我) are used. Another characteristic of this scripture is defining Tathāgatagarbha from the perspective of 'innately pure yet afflicted (心性本淨 客塵煩惱),' thereby elucidating the relationship between the pure mind of Tathāgatagarbha and afflictions. Furthermore, Tathāgatagarbha in this scripture is considered as having aspects of both emptiness and non-emptiness. For further reference on Shunkyō Katsumata's analysis of the *Shengman jing*, see the following source: Wonkyung, "여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the 'Tathāgata-garbha Thought]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 29 (2001): 171-172.

However, this concept of non-emptiness is often misunderstood as representing aspects of Tathāgatagarbha such as temporal existence, causation, birth and death, and differentiation. This misunderstanding seems to arise from overlooking the broader scope of the concept of emptiness in Tathāgatagarbha thought compared to the early Mahāyāna concept. Another source of this confusion may be the misapplication of the well-known framework of the *Qixin lun*, the One Mind with Two Aspects (一心二門).³⁶⁶ Specifically, this misunderstanding involves wrongly aligning the aspect of Suchness (心真如門) with emptiness (空) and the aspect of birth and death (心生滅門) with non-emptiness (不空) of Suchness. However, as indicated in the above quotes, the correct interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha thought is to understand non-emptiness solely as representing the pure virtues and wisdom of Tathāgatagarbha. In the *Qixin lun*, the idea of Tathāgatagarbha's virtues is developed as they are actively intervening in practitioners, provided as pure Attributes (相) and Functions (用) for practice and awakening. These elements are not included in categories typically considered negative, such as discrimination (差別), that is, not part of the aspect of birth and death.

One notable aspect in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition's discussion of the concepts of emptiness and non-emptiness involves the evolution of understanding the term *wo* (我). As previously discussed, *wo* refers to the notion of 'self,' which was unequivocally negated in early Buddhism as it was viewed as conditional. This negation of the conditional concept of the self continues in the Mahāyāna tradition as well; the self as an object of self-recognition by sentient

³⁶⁶ According to Huanzhen Feng, "One Mind with Two Aspects" is one of the philosophical characteristics that penetrate the *Qixin lun*. See Huanzhen Feng (馮煥珍), "*Dasheng qixin lun fei fojiao ma* 《大乘起信論》「非佛教」嗎—關於「《起信論》非佛教」說的教理學反省 (Is the *Qixin lun* not Buddhist?: A Theological Reflection on the Claim that the '*Qixin lun* is Not Buddhist')," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* (中華佛學研) 09 (2005): 31.

beings remains conditional and temporary. Yet, another understanding of the self, endowed with positive characteristics such as the Four Virtues, undergoes a transformation and pertains to the Dharma-body, essentially unchanging. This understanding indicates the concept of True Self or Tathāgatagarbha.³⁶⁷ This True Self is non-empty in the sense of possessing inherent virtues, but empty in being empirically inaccessible. Although the Tathāgatagarbha tradition explains the concept of the self with the same terms for 'self' (我) and 'emptiness' (空), the divergent meanings encompassed in the differentiated concepts of the self and emptiness have made the concept of the self in the later Mahāyāna tradition a particularly puzzling topic for many scholars.

3.3.4 True Self as an *A Priori* Condition for Cognition and Practice

Another notable characteristic in the later Tathāgatagarbha thought is the development of the concept of Tathāgatagarbha's non-emptiness as an a priori basis for cognition and existence. In the early Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises, Tathāgatagarbha's non-emptiness was basically explained as the foundation of enlightenment and possessing pure virtues. However, what these virtues specifically are and their meaning and role in the process of enlightenment were not clearly elucidated. The *Qixin lun*, circulated relatively later, adopts the theories of the

³⁶⁷ Related to this point, the *Daban niepan jing* equates the self directly with the Buddha: “The term 'self' (我) means Buddha (佛); 'permanent' (常) refers to the Dharma-body (法身); 'blissful' (樂) signifies Nirvāṇa (涅槃); and 'pure' (淨) denotes the Dharma. (我者，即是佛義；常者是法身義；樂者是涅槃義；淨者是法義。)” Huiyan (慧嚴), ed., *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0375.0617a23-24; Furthermore, the *Daban niepan jing* states that such True Self can be attained by overcoming the misconceptions of 'non-self' and 'emptiness': “By extinguishing impermanence, one attains the permanent Nirvāṇa; by extinguishing suffering, one attains bliss; by extinguishing emptiness, one attains truth; by extinguishing the notion of non-self, one attains the True Self. (殺無常者得常涅槃，殺苦得樂，殺空得實，殺於無我而得真我。)” Ibid., T.12.0375.0727c14-16.

Yogācāra school, which was prevalent in China at the time, and ontologically and epistemologically expands the meaning of the virtues possessed by Tathāgatagarbha.³⁶⁸ This development of Tathāgatagarbha concept is represented by this treatise's analysis of One Mind with Two Aspects.³⁶⁹ The *Qixin lun* attributes the characteristics of good virtues, previously described in the Tathāgatagarbha scriptures, to the aspect of true Suchness (心真如門) of the sentient beings' minds. This aspect, primarily referred to as Suchness and also as Tathāgatagarbha, inherits the traditional interpretation as the innate basis of enlightenment in all sentient beings. However, its immutability, ineffability, and inconceivability are emphasized as well. Meanwhile, the *Qixin lun* notably evolves from the traditional Tathāgatagarbha doctrine in its second aspect of the mind, the aspect of birth and death (心生滅門). Here, it adapts and borrows the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* from the Yogācāra school, explaining Tathāgatagarbha as the basis enabling cognition and experiential activities. The *Qixin lun* states:

‘Birth and death based on causation’ refers to the transformation of thought (意, *mānas*) and consciousness (意識, *vijñāna*) in the minds of sentient beings. What does this mean? It is said that there is ignorance relying on *ālaya-vijñāna*, leading to the unawareness of Suchness, which gives rise to the subject of perception (能見) and the boundary of the object (能現). This brings about tendency to possess the object boundary as one's own, which causes continuous delusions, hence it is called ‘thought.’ This thought then transforms into five functions. What are these five? First is called the karmic consciousness (業識) because the ‘unenlightened mind’ moves due to the power of ignorance. Second is called the transformative consciousness (轉識) as the

³⁶⁸ According to Duckworth, the traditional Tathāgatagarbha assertion that ‘sentient beings possess Buddha-nature equal to that of the Buddha’ already constitutes an ontological argument. See Douglas Duckworth, “Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism,” in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 241; However, even if one accepts the general assertion of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition as an ontological argument, it can be said to differ slightly from the ontological stance in the *Qixin lun*, which perceives the relationship between phenomena and Tathāgatagarbha based on an epistemological relationship.

³⁶⁹ “顯示正義者，依一心法，有二種門。云何為二？一者、心真如門，二者、心生滅門。是二種門，皆各總攝一切法。此義云何？以是二門不相離故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0576a04-07.

moved mind functions to perceive objects. Third is the manifesting consciousness (現識), which displays all object boundaries, analogous to a bright mirror reflecting the colors of an object. When the five sensory objects (form, sound, odor, taste, touch) are presented to the mind, the five types of consciousness (based on eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) immediately manifest. ... Fourth is the discerning consciousness (智識), which distinguishes between deluded dharmas and pure dharmas. Fifth is the inheriting consciousness (相續識) because continuous delusions keep inheriting without ceasing. ... What does this mean? All dharmas arise from the mind. All object boundaries in the world are maintained and linger due to the ignorance and delusion of sentient beings. Therefore, all dharmas are like images in a mirror, having no substance and are merely established vainly by the mind.³⁷⁰

The above quotation explains the emergence and structure of human conscious activities. In the *Qixin lun*, these activities are divided into five categories. These include the differentiation of the subject of cognition and experience from objects within phenomena, as well as the subjective interpretation and judgment formed about the perceived objects. The continuous activity of these 'thoughts (意, *mānas*)' constitutes the flow of the 'subject's consciousness'.³⁷¹ The term 'thought' expresses these processes from the subject's perspective, and 'consciousness' refers to its activity. As the first sentence of the quotation specifies, such establishment of thought and consciousness is fundamentally based on the minds of sentient beings.³⁷² The world, as perceived and

³⁷⁰ “復次，生滅因緣者，所謂眾生依心、意、意識轉故。此義云何？以依阿梨耶識說有無明不覺而起，能見、能現、能取境界，起念相續，故說為意。此意復有五種名。云何為五？一者、名為業識，謂無明力不覺心動故。二者、名為轉識，依於動心能見相故。三者、名為現識，所謂能現一切境界，猶如明鏡現於色像；現識亦爾，隨其五塵對至，即現無有前後。... 四者、名為智識，謂分別染淨法故。五者、名為相續識，以念相應不斷故。... 此義云何？以一切法皆從心起妄念而生。當知世間一切境界，皆依眾生無明妄心而得住持，是故一切法，如鏡中像無體可得，唯心虛妄。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0577b03-22.

³⁷¹ According to Fazang's commentary, the explanation in the *Qixin lun* regarding the inheriting consciousness (相續識) as a continuous activity of consciousness is predicated on the immutability of Suchness, which forms the basis of that consciousness. See “以念相應不斷者。法執相應得長相續。此約自體不斷釋相續義也。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0265b08-09.

³⁷² Synthesizing the commentaries of Wonhyo and Fazang on the above quotation, Chongsik Chun presents an interpretation that the conscious activities in the *Qixin lun* are the consequences of taking Tathāgatagarbha as the cause (因) and fundamental ignorance as the condition (緣). Such an interpretation, which posits Tathāgatagarbha as the direct cause of consciousness, also acknowledges Tathāgatagarbha as the basis of conscious activities. See Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교* (The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening

manifested through the ongoing activity of consciousness, is thus constituted. According to the developed Tathāgatagarbha thought in the *Qixin lun*, all existences within the world (法界, *dharmadhātu*) are experientially constructed according to the subjective cognitive activities of the perceiver. Their lack of fixed essence and continuous birth and death are due to the restless and generative nature of these human cognitive activities. Therefore, we can see that the concept of Tathāgatagarbha is evolving in meaning from a perspective that combines epistemology and ontology. It is important to note that such conscious activities are established upon the basis of Tathāgatagarbha, with the addition of cognitive contamination caused by fundamental ignorance (根本無明). From the perspective of practice, all existences in the world constituted by these conscious activities inevitably carry a negative connotation and must ultimately be ceased through practice.

In the context of cognition, the significance of Tathāgatagarbha in the *Qixin lun* goes beyond mere perception. This treatise describes another form of cognition that is innately present in the nature of Suchness prior to experience. In discussing the ‘Three Categories of Greatness (三大)’ of Tathāgatagarbha, the *Qixin lun* states:

The Ground (體) and Attributes (相) of Suchness neither increase nor decrease in any case, whether it be ordinary beings, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, or Buddhas. They are not created or destroyed over time but are ultimately constant, inherently possessing all virtues from the very nature of Suchness. This is because there is an attribute of Great Wisdom and its luminosity (大智慧光明) in the fundamental nature of Suchness, an attribute that illuminates the world (法界, *dharmadhātu*), an attribute of true knowing, an attribute of the innately pure mind, an attribute of permanence, bliss, self, and purity, and an attribute that is serene, unchanging, and free. Suchness encompasses more virtues than the sands of the Ganges, and these virtues are characterized by being unseparated (不離), uninterrupted (不斷), undifferentiated (不異), and

of Faith by Wonhyo and Fazang) (Seoul: Yehak, 2006), 283.

inconceivable (不思議), while never lacking in function. Therefore, it is referred to as Tathāgatagarbha and also known as the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata (如來法身).³⁷³

The 'Three Categories of Greatness' is an analysis that approaches Suchness in three categories: metaphysical Ground (體), essential Attributes (相), and phenomenal Functions (用). This appears to be an expansion of the conventional 'Ground and Functions (體用)' dichotomy, characterizing the Tathāgatagarbha thought it presents in the *Qixin lun*. As explained in the above quotation, the Attributes are intrinsically related to the Ground and share its metaphysical status, considered as *a priori* and not defined empirically.³⁷⁴ This notion, represented by 'Great Wisdom and its luminosity (大智慧光明),' is also explained in other sections of the *Qixin lun*. According to these expositions, these Attributes are essentially inseparable from the essence of Suchness. Therefore, the Attributes are “one flavor (一味)” along with Suchness. This point implies that a sentient being who has cleansed the mind's impurities naturally reveals the manifestations of these Attributes and can truly illuminate and understand the true reality of the world of dharmas.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ “復次，真如自體相者，一切凡夫、聲聞、緣覺、菩薩、諸佛，無有增減，非前際生、非後際滅，畢竟常恒。從本已來，性自滿足一切功德。所謂自體有大智慧光明義故，遍照法界義故，真實識知義故，自性清淨心義故，常樂我淨義故，清涼不變自在義故。具足如是過於恒沙不離、不斷、不異、不思議佛法，乃至滿足無有所少義故，名為如來藏，亦名如來法身。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0579a12-20.

³⁷⁴ This *a priori* nature is expressed as 'permanence' (常恒) in the above quote from the *Qixin lun*. Fazang explains this expression as follows: “It is called permanence (常) because it does not arise in the past, and it is called constancy (恒) because it does not perish in the future (非前際生故常。非後際滅故恒也。)” In essence, it is an indication that it is always present as it does not manifest in phenomena. See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0273b15-16.

³⁷⁵ “云何復說體有如是種種功德？答曰：雖實有此諸功德義，而無差別之相，等同一味，唯一真如。... 心性不起，即是大智慧光明義故。若心起見，則有不見之相。心性離見，即是遍照法界義故。... 心性無動則有過恒沙等諸淨功德相義示現。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0579a21-b05.

Fazang, in his commentary *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), interprets the Attributes of Suchness as six concise points: 1) The wisdom of original awakening is luminous. 2) It illuminates all dharmas. 3) There is no delusion in its illumination. 4) The nature of Suchness is liberated from delusion and contamination. 5) All virtues are perfectly possessed by the nature of Suchness. 6) These virtues are unchanging.³⁷⁶

What can we infer from the descriptions of Great Wisdom and its luminosity, etc.? Given the earlier discussion on the aspect of birth and death (心生滅門), where human cognition and experience are understood to be fundamentally shaped by the contamination of the mind, it follows that the wisdom of Tathāgatagarbha, which manifests only upon the removal of this contamination, holds a distinct status; this attribute represents an uncontaminated purity, fundamentally different from the conditional processes of cognitive and experiential activities. Based on this essential purity of wisdom to be recovered, Wonhyo defines Great Wisdom and its luminosity as Indiscriminate Wisdom (無分別智) and Acquired Wisdom (後得智).³⁷⁷ The nature of the wisdom and its characteristics as a type of cognitive activity in the *Qixin lun* is explained in the section discussing the practice of the Five Pāramitās (五行), specifically through the practice

³⁷⁶“一本覺智明義。二本覺顯照諸法義。三顯照之時無倒義。四性離惑染義。五性德圓備義。六性德無遷義。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0273b23-25.

³⁷⁷“是知依真如門。止諸境相。故無所分別。即成無分別智。依生滅門。分別諸相。觀諸理趣。即成後得智也隨順奢摩他觀義。” Wonhyo (元曉), the *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0222a02-05; Fazang adds further explanation to this. According to him, the wisdom attained through the practice of ceasing discrimination is Fundamental Indiscriminatory Wisdom (根本無分別智), while the wisdom gained by observing the phenomena of birth and death is Acquired Wisdom (後得智). He also interprets that both types of wisdom are based on the One Mind, hence the necessity of paralleling the practices of cessation and observation to achieve them. See “是知依真如門止諸境相無所分別。即成根本無分別智。依生滅門分別說相。觀諸理趣。即成後得智。然二門唯一心故。是故雙運方得名為正止觀也。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0282c27-283a02.

method of ‘cessation and observation (止觀).’ This practice combines the practices of Concentration (禪定) and Wisdom (般若) from the conventional Six Pāramitās (六波羅蜜) of the Mahāyāna tradition. Cessation (止, *samatha*) and observation (觀, *vipassanā*) each refer to the practices of calming the mind through meditation and direct insight into the truth on the purified mind.³⁷⁸ To briefly introduce the exposition on this practice from the *Qixin lun*, the practice of cessation begins with calming the physical sensations and mental images (想) in a tranquil environment. It involves stopping all thoughts, even the thought of stopping thoughts, essentially ceasing all cognitive discriminations towards the objective world.³⁷⁹ According to Wonhyo, discrimination refers to recognizing all the forms of dharmas manifested in phenomena through the function of contaminated consciousness.³⁸⁰ As this practice matures and reaches the state of cessation (止), the practitioner enters the Samādhi of Suchness (真如三昧), realizing that the world of dharmas is indeed One (一相) with Suchness.³⁸¹ According to the *Qixin lun*, in the process of cessation practice, practitioners must also engage in observation practices. Through contemplation, practitioners observe that all conditioned phenomena (有爲法) and all activities of

³⁷⁸ “云何修行止觀門？所言止者，謂止一切境界相，隨順奢摩他觀義故。所言觀者，謂分別因緣生滅相，隨順毘鉢舍那觀義故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0582a12-15.

³⁷⁹ “若修止者，住於靜處端坐正意，不依氣息、不依形色、不依於空、不依地水火風，乃至不依見聞覺知。一切諸想隨念皆除，亦遣除想。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0582a16-19.

³⁸⁰ Wonhyo's interpretation, based on the *Yujia shidi lun* (瑜伽師地論), that the practice of cessation in the *Qixin lun* is about ceasing the conscious discrimination of the world, can be referenced as follows: “初略中言謂止一切境界相者。先由分別作諸外塵。今以覺慧破外塵相。塵相既止。無所分別。故名為止也。次言分別生滅相者。依生滅門。觀察法相。故言分別。” Wonhyo (元曉), the *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0221c25-28.

³⁸¹ “若從坐起去來進止有所施作，於一切時常念 方便隨順觀察，久習淳熟其心得住。以心住故漸漸猛利，隨順得入真如三昧，深伏煩惱信心增長，速成不退。唯除疑惑、不信、誹謗、重罪、業障、我慢、懈怠，如是等人所不能入。復次，依如三昧故，則知法界一相。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0582a23-b01.

the mind lack a fixed essence, undergoing birth and death, ultimately leading to their disappearance.³⁸² This, in other words, is an observation of the ontological and epistemological relationships between the phenomena and the mind that manifests them. In summary, the practice of cessation and observation involves observing only the true aspect of the arising and ceasing of phenomena, while the activities of discriminative consciousness are stilled.

Analyzing the explanation of the attribute of Great Wisdom and its luminosity of Suchness,' we can see that it aligns with the structure on the Ground and Attributes of Suchness implicitly premised in the context of the observation practice. The Attributes of Suchness (相大) is said to manifest only when the mind's impurities are completely removed, and it aligns with the mind-purifying process implied in the cessation practice. That is, the cessation practice is a prerequisite process to reveal wisdom as the nature of Suchness. Moreover, the wisdom that manifests upon the removal of impurities on the mind is said to truly illuminate the entire phenomena, and it correlates with observing the true reality of 'the continuous birth and death of phenomena based on the mind perceiving them' in the state of Samādhi of Suchness. In observation practice, therefore, contemplation on phenomena should be considered as having a status distinct from contaminated cognitive activities, similar to the philosophical characteristics of the 'Attributes of Suchness (相大).' More specifically, the objects of observation in this practice should be examined in connection with the contaminated activities of cognition and experience of the mind and the consequent construction of the experiential world. What is

³⁸² “修習觀者，當觀一切世間有為之法，無得久停須臾變壞，一切心行念念生滅，以是故苦。應觀過去所念諸法恍惚如夢，應觀現在所念諸法猶如電光，應觀未來所念諸法猶如於雲忽爾而起，應觀世間一切有身悉皆不淨，種種穢污無一可樂。” Ibid., T.32.1666.582c15-21; Wonhyo refers to the observation practice in the *Qixin lun* as 'Contemplation on Dharmas' (法相觀), interpreting the objects of this contemplation as signifying impermanence (無常), suffering (苦), karmic circulation (流轉), and impurity (不淨). Fazang also inherits and upholds this interpretation. See “一法相觀。謂無常。苦。流轉。不淨。文相可知。” Wonhyo (元曉), the *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0225b06.

perceived through the Great Wisdom manifested in cessation and observation practice is not a specific static existence within phenomena, but the truth as modality that 'the existences within phenomena are constituted by the contaminated cognitive activities of the mind.' In other words, the function of such wisdom is not an experiential consciousness that targets a specific existence, but an '*a priori* and reflective' consciousness that focuses on the relationship between the subject of the mind and the objects constituted in phenomena due to its experiential cognition. As explained in the *Qixin lun*, such reflective consciousness is not established by experience nor can it be grasped by our experiential cognitive activities. Rather, it is the inconceivable essence of the mind itself. Furthermore, it is important to note that this reflective consciousness is necessarily postulated as essential for achieving the ultimate truth in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition.

To summarize, in the *Qixin lun*, the concept of Tathāgatagarbha is depicted as a foundation for both types of conscious activities; it serves as a basis for all experiential conscious activities and for the pure, reflective conscious activities regarding the constitutive relationship of such experiential activities with objects within phenomena. Thus, Tathāgatagarbha is not only the ground for the experiential self and all existences but also the basis for enlightenment. If we could refer to the bearers of each of these types of consciousness as the subject or self, then there could certainly be two kinds of concepts of the self: the empirical self and the philosophical self. To briefly characterize these distinctions, the former concept of the self can be defined as the self in the general sense of a *person*. This self takes the contaminated mind as the subject of cognition and experience. In this context, the concept of the self is defined cognitively as 'I', and this self-perception shapes our understanding of other beings based on our own notion of 'I think of them.' As the elements constituting a person, such as conditions and afflictions, lack substantiality, such a self must inherently be empty.

As Salie King points out, however, not all elements that can be experienced by the self are products of contamination and inversion. In addition to the Ground and Attributes I have discussed above, the notion Suchness in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition also includes Attributes and Function, which refer to the auspicious manifestations based on the inexhaustible virtues of Suchness. Tathāgatagarbha was considered both empty and non-empty in the tradition because it possesses numerous virtues. Functions manifested based on these virtues inherit the purity of the Attributes and can thus be referred to as 'non-empty (不空)' in that sense.³⁸³ It should be noted, however, that once manifested in phenomena, they are subject to birth and death and, in that sense, are essentially conditional. Among the Three Categories of Greatness, Ground and Attributes are inherent aspects of the Buddha-nature and do not possess individual peculiarities; they are universal. The Function, however, is revealed within phenomena and is considered to conditionally form the personal characteristics and behaviors in the process of practice and awakening. The Function in Tathāgatagarbha thought presents a conceptual ambiguity. It appears conditionally in phenomena while retaining the purity of Buddha-nature, thereby representing the characteristics of Tathāgatagarbha thought in depicting Buddha-nature as both empty and non-empty.

Interpreted from the perspective of the self, the Ground and Attributes of Buddha-nature can be seen as representing the essence of the philosophical self. In this framework, the Function serves as a philosophical link, sourcing certain aspects of the empirical self from the purity and

³⁸³ Sallie King argues that, just as the Buddha-nature is not empty, the characteristics of these functions that are based on the Buddha-nature are also not empty. She contends that these characteristics contribute to individuality, enabling a person to become a truly altruistic individual. See Sallie B. King, "Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person," *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 163–164; However, she argues that only the characteristics and behaviors manifested by the non-empty Suchness can constitute the phenomenal self. This argument seems to overlook the point that even the pure functions of Suchness, once manifested in phenomena, are essentially conditional. Since they are both contingent on conditions, it can be said that all of these, at the moment of their manifestation, constitute the self as it appears.

immutability inherent in the philosophical self. This establishes a connection between the philosophical self's purity and the manifested, experiential aspects of the phenomenal self. Therefore, as we will analyze in detail in the next section, the concept of Function plays an important role in the theory of practice and enlightenment in the Tathāgatagarbha thought, which presupposes the possibility of the ultimate awakening for all sentient beings.

Another concept of the self can be said to be the True Self as an *a priori* foundation enabling the empirical self, similar to the notion of the 'transcendental subjectivity' or 'philosophical self' in Western idealism. While the empirical self is constituted by the cognitive activities of a contaminated mind, this True Self is aligned with the attribute of Great Wisdom—a universal subjectivity that takes reflective consciousness as its nature. The attribute of wisdom often emphasized in the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, despite being explained through notions like cognitive self-awareness and awakening, should not be viewed as the activity of the sixth (意識) or the seventh consciousness (末那識). The characteristic of the activities of these consciousnesses presupposes the separation of subject and object, as they are discriminatory consciousness. In other words, these consciousnesses can only be established by postulating a phenomenal self as the subject of consciousness and the objects perceived by such a self. However, the attribute of wisdom in Suchness can be said to be a more fundamental reflective consciousness that observes both the separated subject and object, that is, it reflects upon the cognitive activities that presuppose the distinction between subject and object. Unlike the consciousness activities based on the sixth and seventh consciousnesses, which become the objects of reflection, this reflective consciousness itself is not the object of another consciousness. This characteristic of Great Wisdom is often metaphorized as a 'lamp' in the Mahāyāna tradition. A lamp inherently has the quality of brightly illuminating and revealing surrounding objects, but

the lamp itself does not require another lamp to reveal itself. Similarly, Great Wisdom reflects the consciousness processes that presuppose subject-object distinction, but it itself is revealed without the need for something else. Therefore, the philosophical self as the bearer of such reflective consciousness is assured of its *a priori* nature. From this analysis, Kant's framework of distinguishing between the 'determining self' and the 'determinable self' appears to still be valid in analyzing the concept of the self in Tathāgatagarbha thought.³⁸⁴ The notion of the self in Tathāgatagarbha thought, which have led to many misunderstandings, can thus be clearly distinguished through these two conceptions of the self.

3.4 Self, Morality, and Practice in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan Traditions

In the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, the philosophical significance of the differentiation in the concept of the self, distinct from traditional Buddhist perspectives, appears to have been

³⁸⁴ Applying Kant's dualistic framework of reason and phenomena to the understanding of Buddhist thought is a subject that has been attempted several times in modern Buddhist studies, and as such, it is also prone to criticism. For instance, Insub Hur raises two questions regarding the application of Kant's dualism to Buddhism: 1) From the perspective of logical positivism, the characteristics of Tathāgatagarbha, understood as unconditional, are merely by-products of human thought. 2) If concepts equivalent to Buddhist truth (such as emptiness or Tathāgatagarbha) are presupposed as mystical and beyond experience, they cannot be the subject of academic inquiry.

To briefly counter his arguments, first, the concept of reason in Kant and the Buddha-nature in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition are sought to understand the necessary conditions that make human thought and reflection possible. Claiming them as mere by-products of thought does not provide any alternative interpretation to the basis of thought. Also, the description that Tathāgatagarbha is not an empirical object appears in the sutras and treatises themselves that deal with Tathāgatagarbha thought, not as a result of philosophical interpretation. If one considers Tathāgatagarbha thought itself as non-Buddhist and criticizes it, then the second point of argument by Insub Hur may be valid. However, if not, such criticism of the concept of Tathāgatagarbha is not very productive in understanding Tathāgatagarbha thought. Moreover, such criticism, like the second one, can be raised against all kinds of metaphysical theories. This critique aims at fundamental thinking of metaphysics and is more a demonstration of irreconcilable philosophical approaches than a critique that needs to be clarified. For reference on Insub Hur's criticism, see the following: Insub Hur, "공 (空) 개념의 현대적 해석의 문제점 고찰 [A Critical Review on Modern Interpretation of the Concept of 'śūnya']," *The Journal of Asian Philosophy in Korea* (東洋哲學) 34 (2010): 732.

inadequately explored in existing studies. This is because the moral implications inherently associated with the concept of True Self and their interrelations, as well as their explanations in relation to practice, have not been thoroughly examined. The establishment of the concept of True Self not only provides a unique solution to the recurring issue of self-continuity raised in traditional Buddhist understanding of the self, but more importantly, it offers a theoretical framework that sets practical foundations for altruistic practice and enlightenment from the metaphysical basis of Tathāgatagarbha. This holds importance as one of the major streams of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics.

However, it is important to acknowledge that these new moral implications associated with Tathāgatagarbha thought also brought along new forms of limitations that were not raised in traditional Buddhism. Particularly, with the emergence of a metaphysical concept of the self in Tathāgatagarbha thought and the philosophical shifts in understanding the self, the tension between supporters of the Prajñāpāramitā or earlier traditions and proponents of Tathāgatagarbha thought was inevitable. It is hard to deny that this tension with other traditions, along with the philosophical limitations of Tathāgatagarbha thought, has been a subject of intense debate among modern Buddhist scholars, and continues to provoke unproductive discussions in today's East Asian Buddhist communities. These debates often involve the 'authenticity issue' of which teachings better convey the true intent of Siddhartha Gautama, making them not easily resolvable.

In the final section of this chapter, I will examine the philosophical significance of the moral implications inherent in the concept of the True Self in Tathāgatagarbha thought. This aims to analyze the key concepts of Tathāgatagarbha thought from an ethical perspective, to discover any differences from traditional teachings, and especially to characterize the ethics of Tathāgatagarbha thought. I will also review how these moral implications were concretized as

they were inherited in the Huayan tradition. Finally, by introducing modern philosophical debates surrounding Tathāgatagarbha thought, I will discuss the limitations associated with it.

3.4.1 Resolving the Persistence Question in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

One philosophical advantage gained by introducing the concept of the True Self in Tathāgatagarbha thought is that it offers a useful model for addressing the persistence question of the self, which is crucial when discussing the morality and practice of a person. Across both the early Indian Buddhist traditions and East Asian traditions, the teachings of karma and dependent origination provide the rational basis for practice and liberation, forming a specific theoretical framework for their achievement. In other words, karma and dependent origination not only entail a modality for correctly understanding the reality of phenomena but also, by granting ‘rational causality’ between practitioners and their actions, fundamentally enable practice. The causality here is not a value-neutral listing of objective events in sequence but a morally value-oriented causality that presupposes 'a specific action must be followed by a corresponding retribution.' That is, the moral quality of a practitioner's action produces a result of similar quality, which in turn leads to further succeeding karmas, constructing a path of transformation for the practitioner themselves. This principle implicitly, yet indispensably, assumes that the practitioner who commits the karma and the practitioner who receives its result are the 'same person.' If the practitioner at two different points in time were considered separate persons, it would lead to the unreasonable conclusion that one practitioner is receiving the retribution of karma not committed by themselves, i.e., by another person. Moreover, it implies that the results of a practitioner's actions would not return to the agent themselves. If the action were morally negative, this would

mean that the practitioner who committed the karma would not bear its consequences. It can lead to a diminished sense of responsibility for their actions. Therefore, for the karma committed by a practitioner to lead to their merit or responsibility, the practitioners at the point of committing the karma and at the point of receiving its result must necessarily be considered the same subject.

It is clear that the Tathāgatagarbha tradition's response to the persistence question is not the only solution that can be offered within Buddhist traditions. As we have seen, even within early Buddhist tradition, responses compatible with the teaching of non-self have been presented, and it is evident that another Mahāyāna teaching such as Yogācāra possesses a theoretical framework to address the issue of the continuity of the self. The philosophical challenge faced by traditional perspectives before Tathāgatagarbha, related to the issue of persistence question, stems from understanding the self as being constituted only by conditions, thus lacking any real substance in itself (實有, *dravya-sat*). In this traditional view of the self, there is no stipulation that can define the identity of a person. Such perspective of the self sometimes appears to contemporary scholars as analogous to a 'nominalist' perspective. That is, there exists no self as either synchronic and diachronic unity, and such a self is merely abstract, constituted conceptually by knitting together experiences from various moments. Therefore, while the unity imagined to include a range of experiences is not entirely separate from reality, it also is not entirely real.³⁸⁵ In this modern interpretation, whether it is the self itself or the components that constitute the self, the 'unchanging' aspects are explicitly negated, which can be said to consistently embrace the early Buddhist view on non-self. Some scholars with this perspective argue that understanding the Buddhist self as a "stream of consciousness or continuum" that

³⁸⁵ Georges Dreyfus, "Self and Subjectivity: A Middle Way Approach," in *Self, No Self?: Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*, edited by Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi (Oxford University Press, 2011), 133.

continually changes according to karma is appropriate.³⁸⁶ This concept seems to address persistence questions. That is, because different subjects at different times are placed upon the same stream of consciousness, they should be considered to have an identity.

The solution presented in early Buddhism appears to be further developed and inherited through the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* in the *Yogācāra* tradition, one of the early *Mahāyāna* traditions. To briefly describe the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna*, as indicated by its synonym 'storehouse consciousness' (藏識), it refers to the subject of the mind that holds the seeds (種子, *bīja*) as latent defilements generated by cognitive experiential activities. These seeds arise and actualize due to preceding karmic effects, and in turn, become the cause for subsequent seeds. This is the manifestation (現行) of the seeds.³⁸⁷ The appearance of the phenomenal self at every moment is said to be constituted by the manifestation of seeds inherited through the activities of the first six consciousnesses and the seventh consciousness (*manas*). However, it is important to

³⁸⁶ Based on the interpretation grounded in the *Abhidharma* tradition, Georges Dreyfus argues that an "enduring experiencing subject" does not exist and is replaced by "a stream of consciousness or continuum" that is the bearer of consciousness, substituting the role of the subject. Moreover, he claims that this perspective on consciousness and its holder is "compatible with a number of contemporary views of the mind." See *Ibid.*, 117-118.

³⁸⁷ For a detailed explanation of the relationship between seeds and *ālaya-vijñāna*, as well as the meaning of transformation of seeds, refer to the following passage from the *Cheng Weishi Lun*: “由一切種識，如是如是變，以展轉力故，彼彼分別生。論曰：一切種識，謂本識中能生自果功能差別，此生等流、異熟、土用、增上果，故名一切種。除離繫者，非種生故，彼雖可證而非種果，要現起道斷結得故。有展轉義非此所說，此說能生分別種故。此識為體，故立識名，種離本識無別性故。種識二言簡非種識，有識非種、種非識故。又種識言顯識中種，非持種識，後當說故。此識中種餘緣助故，即便如是如是轉變，謂從生位轉至熟時，顯變種多重言如是，謂一切種攝三熏習共不共等識種盡故。展轉力者，謂八現識及彼相應相見分等，彼皆互有相助故。即現識等總名分別，虛妄分別為自性故。分別類多故言彼彼。此顯意說，雖無外緣，由本識中有一切種轉變差別，及以現行八種識等展轉力故，彼彼分別而亦得生，何假外緣方起分別？諸淨法起應知亦然。淨種現行為緣生故，所說種現緣生分別。云何應知此緣生相？緣且有四：一因緣，謂有為法親辦自果。此體有二，一種子、二現行。種子者，謂本識中善染無記諸界地等功能差別，能引次後自類功能，及起同時自類現果。此唯望彼是因緣性。現行者，謂七轉識及彼相應所變相見性界地等，除佛果善極劣無記，餘熏本識生自類種。此唯望彼是因緣性。第八心品無所熏故，非簡所依，獨能熏故，極微圓故，不熏成種。現行同類展轉相望皆非因緣，自種生故。一切異類展轉相望亦非因緣，不親生故。有說異類同類現行展轉相望為因緣者，應知假說，或隨轉門。有唯說種是因緣性，彼依顯勝。非盡理說，聖說轉識與阿賴耶展轉相望為因緣故。” Vasubandhu (世親), trans. by Xuanzang (玄奘), *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論), T.31.1585.0040a01-b06.

note, as mentioned earlier, that the eighth consciousness, *ālaya-vijñāna*, is not considered a permanent or enduring concept as it is in Tathāgatagarbha thought, since it is composed of the inheritance of these seeds.³⁸⁸ Therefore, the final awakening in the Yogācāra tradition means realizing that all processes of cognition are merely 'transformations (轉變) of consciousness' and stopping their inheritance and, consequently, *Samsāra*. This also implies realizing the non-self of dharmas, which, in its fundamental context, does not greatly deviate from the solution presented in early Buddhism.

The theoretical frameworks within early Buddhism and Yogācāra tradition successfully address the issue of personal identity without undermining traditional Buddhist understanding of the self. However, even these refined concepts might be critiqued for still presupposing a perpetual self as "abstract continuity" within an individual, tying together disparate empirical subjects over time.³⁸⁹ If this critique is not acknowledged, the question of how a karma-

³⁸⁸ From the perspective that considers all objects appearing in phenomena as the cognitive representation (*vijñapti*) based on the *ālaya-vijñāna*, the two traditions can be seen as similar. Both the Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha traditions adopt the term *ālaya-vijñāna* to postulate the subject of the human mind, suggesting a similarity. However, the claims each tradition makes about subjectivity are nearly opposite. For example, the theory of the one mind in the *Qixin lun*, while partially resonating with the Yogācāra concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* as the foundation causing the arising and ceasing of phenomena (心生滅), diverges significantly in its aspect of Suchness (心眞如). Suchness, with its inherent pure Attributes and Function, leading beings to shun the defiled and pursue the true Dharma, is an aspect not found in the Yogācāra perspective. Hence, looking at the issue of the self, the Yogācāra's *ālaya-vijñāna* logic is closer to the traditional view of non-self which seeks to resolve the contradiction between *anātman* and the notion of reincarnation, offering an excellent solution to these logical problems of the traditional view, as Dreyfus suggests. On the other hand, the Tathāgatagarbha tradition posits Tathāgatagarbha as an immortal subjectivity, mentioning its unique functions while also incorporating the concept of 'adaptation to conditions (隨緣)' to parallel the empirical notion of the self. For Dreyfus's argument and a brief description of the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* in the Yogācāra tradition, see the following references: Georges Dreyfus, "Self and Subjectivity: A Middle Way Approach," in *Self, No Self?: Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*, edited by Mark Siderits, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi (Oxford University Press, 2011), 141-142; Jongwook Kim, "무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the Buddhist Concept of Non-self]," *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 115-117.

³⁸⁹ In the discourse on Buddhist concepts of the self, Rudd counters Georges Dreyfus and Sue Hamilton's view of the self as a "continuing stream of experience" or "stream theory," which sees the individual as a collection of changing moments. Rudd argues that even a self understood as a continuously changing process or flow essentially functions as "something that endures through time," fulfilling the role of a diachronic unity. See Anthony Rudd, "No Self?"

committing practitioner and the future recipient of that karma's results can be considered the same person might look not completely resolved. Moreover, the issue of self-continuity becomes increasingly complex when incorporating the notion of reincarnation. The cycle of karma is not confined to a single existence but links the identity of a practitioner across multiple lives. Therefore, solutions to the persistence question must account for death and rebirth through the principles of karma and dependent origination. While the Yogācāra tradition, with its concept of ālaya-vijñāna, might offer persuasive answers, this issue may pose greater challenges for earlier traditions lacking this concept.

Then, how can we explain the cycle of karma and dependent origination that continues across various times and spaces, even through multiple phenomenological entities, while denying all fixed elements constituting the empirical self? As previously examined, various Buddhist traditions might offer different answers, but the Tathāgatagarbha thought, presupposing an immutable subjectivity known as True Self, can provide a relatively straightforward answer to the issue of self-continuity. According to Tathāgatagarbha philosophy, all occurrences of karmic manifestation and dependent origination, including the empirical self, unfold on the foundation of unchanging philosophical subjectivity. This allows for the connection of all moments of the constantly changing empirical self under one subjectivity; even if the space-time surrounding the self changes or the physical body of the self undergoes transformation, the underlying subjectivity remains unchanged. This applies similarly to linking multiple selves constructed upon such subjectivity, thereby elucidating even the problem of reincarnation.

However, this Tathāgatagarbha approach raises a question: If Suchness is immutable and unconditional, then positing it as the subject of personal identity that presupposes the acceptance

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of experiences might seem contradictory. How can its immutability coexist with the receptivity of experiences? To answer this, the *Qixin lun*'s theory of the One Mind with Two Aspects, interpreting the mind to encompass both immutability (不變) and adaptability (隨緣), is indispensable. According to this theory, the minds of sentient beings inherently possess the aspect of adaptability, which is crucial for receiving karmic consequences leading to contamination or purification of the mind.³⁹⁰ This adaptability is what allows sentient beings to develop a self-conception and, through practice, cleanse their minds. Regardless of the logical validity of this interpretation in the *Qixin lun*, this theoretical framework reconciles immutability with changeability, positing this dual structure of the self as essential to sentient beings' practice and enlightenment. It suggests that an immutable subjectivity underlies personal identity, serving as the foundation for an empirical subject that continuously transforms through the consequences of its actions. In the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition, the concept of *tathāgatagarbha* itself is seen as the key to explaining the continuity of the self. Considering the significance of the persistence question in early Buddhist and pre-Mahāyāna traditions, it is not surprising that *Tathāgatagarbha* thought offers such a solution. This is because, if *Tathāgatagarbha* thought developed from earlier Buddhist traditions, it likely evolved to overcome challenges that were not smoothly addressed by previous traditions.

³⁹⁰ The explanation of Suchness's adaptability to conditions as it appears in the *Qixin lun* is as follows: “顯示正義者，依一心法，有二種門。云何為二？一者、心真如門，二者、心生滅門。是二種門，皆各總攝一切法。此義云何？以是二門不相離故。... 心生滅者，依如來藏故有生滅心，所謂不生不滅與生滅和合，非一非異，名為阿梨耶識。此識有二種義，能攝一切法、生一切法。云何為二？一者、覺義，二者、不覺義。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0576a04-b11.

3.4.2 Practice and Path to Nirvāṇa in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

Another philosophical feature of Tathāgatagarbha thought is based on the unique relationship between the metaphysical characteristics of tathāgatagarbha and how they lead to practice and Nirvāṇa. Returning to the *Qixin lun*'s explanation of observation practice discussed earlier, this treatise states:

If a practitioner cultivates only cessation (止), their mind may become tranquil but also prone to laziness, disliking various good deeds, and losing great compassion in mind. Therefore, one must practice observation (觀) as well. Those who practice observation should realize that all worldly conditioned dharmas (有爲法) do not last but change and vanish in moments, and all mental activities arise and cease momentarily, which is truly suffering. ... It *must* be contemplated (當念) that all sentient beings, having been conditioned by ignorance since beginningless past, have suffered great pains in body and mind. There is endless oppression in the present, and future sufferings are uncertain and hard to escape, yet sentient beings are unaware of their situations, making them truly pitiable. With this thought, one should courageously make a great vow (誓願) to eradicate discriminations in one's mind, widely practice all good deeds across all worlds, and save all sentient beings from suffering with limitless means to bestow upon them the supreme joy of Nirvāṇa. Because of this vow, one will never abandon practicing various good deeds anywhere, anytime, and will not allow laziness in the mind.³⁹¹

The *Qixin lun*'s explanation of observation practice shows the process of intuitively inferring that sentient beings suffering without knowing the truth are pitiable, from the observation that everything manifested by the mind's activities is ephemeral and without a fixed essence. Fazang describes this characteristic of practice as "observation of the sorrow of beings. (悲觀)" It implies that observing phenomena is not only for the practitioner's own liberation but also a means to

³⁹¹ “若人唯修於止，則心沈沒或起懈怠，不樂眾善、遠離大悲，是故修觀。修習觀者，當觀一切世間有為之法，無得久停須臾變壞，一切心行念念生滅，以是故苦。... 如是當念：「一切眾生從無始世來，皆因無明所熏習故令心生滅，已受一切身心大苦。現在即有無量逼迫，未來所苦亦無分齊，難捨難離而不覺知。眾生如是，甚為可愍。」作此思惟，即應勇猛立大誓願：「願令我心離分別故，遍於十方修行一切諸善功德，盡其未來，以無量方便救拔一切苦惱眾生，令得涅槃第一義樂。」以起如是願故，於一切時、一切處，所有眾善，隨已堪能不捨修學，心無懈怠。” Ibid., T.32.1666. 0582c14-0583a02.

arouse great compassion for beings who suffer.³⁹²

In the passage from the *Qixin lun*, the use of the expression "*dang nian* (當念)" to invoke vigilance is notable for its imperative implication, suggesting that arising compassion is deemed essential, not merely accidental or conditional. This perspective challenges a common assumption within Buddhist traditions where emotions such as anger or attachment, being conditional, are generally seen as obstacles to be overcome through practice. Unlike interpretations that emphasize the transcendental nature of Nirvāṇa, dismissing even positive emotions as conditional, the *Qixin lun* views the arousal of compassion as an *inherent and necessary* response when specific practices are fulfilled. Thus, the cultivation of compassion, followed by the establishment of vows and the practice of altruism, forms an integral part of the path.³⁹³ That is, the contemplative achievement of true reality obtained through cessation and observation practice is considered complete when it induces compassion, thereby providing motivation for practical action. This interpretation, which regards not only compassion but also the establishment of vows and the practice of altruistic actions as part of the process of cessation and observation practice, is supported by the terms "observation for vow (誓願觀)" used by Wonhyo and "observation for great vow (大願觀)" by Fazang.³⁹⁴

³⁹² “悲觀中。先觀眾生三世重苦。次難捨下無心厭背故使苦無限也。後眾生如是下深發悲心也。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0286a05-07.

³⁹³ While the *Qixin lun* explicitly articulates the concept, the idea that embodying compassion based on inherent wisdom of Suchness is a prerequisite for Nirvāṇa predates this treatise within Tathāgatarbha tradition. For instance, the *Daban niepan jing* suggests that a practitioner who has achieved wisdom utilizes means such as the practice of the Eightfold Path, the Six Pāramitās, and the Four Boundless States of Mind (四無量心), for liberation. This highlights a continuity in Tathāgatarbha thought, valuing wisdom and compassion as combined and integral to the path to enlightenment. See “有智之人以善方便得脫五陰。善方便者，即八聖道、六波羅蜜、四無量心，以是方便而得解脫，身心不為五陰所害。” Dharmakṣema (曇無讖), trans, *Daban niepan jing* (大般涅槃經), T.12.0374.0500a29-b01.

³⁹⁴ Wonhyo (元曉), the *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0225b08; Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起

Then, within the context of Tathāgatagarbha thought, what accounts for the consideration of compassion—a moral feeling—and practice of altruism as essential components for achieving Nirvāṇa?³⁹⁵ It is based on the metaphysical characteristics presupposed by the notion of Tathāgatagarbha, specifically the limitless virtues (無量功德) and wisdom as Attributes (相) of Suchness. This means that correct observation of phenomena is possible due to the wisdom of Suchness, and similarly, the revelation of compassion is grounded in its virtues. This is evident in the *Qixin lun*, where the notion of ‘Arousal of Mind towards Enlightenment through Ripening Faith in Suchness (信成就發心)’ is explained. According to the *Qixin lun*, this arousal of mind is possible since a practitioner is internally influenced by Suchness's permeation (熏習). This initiative state of mind is categorized into three: 1) Direct Mind (直心), which involves accurately observing the truth of Suchness. 2) Profound Mind (深心), which refers to developing a fondness for all virtuous actions. 3) Great Compassionate Mind (大悲心), which is the ‘desire

信論義記), T.44.1846.0285c17.

³⁹⁵ There may be some debate on whether the concept of great compassion (大悲心) can be understood as a ‘moral feeling’ or ‘moral emotion.’ This is because Buddhist traditions tend not to use concepts related to feelings or emotions when presenting frameworks for practice and enlightenment, and they do not clearly define great compassion as a type of feeling or emotion. However, this does not necessarily mean that the notion of great compassion cannot be interpreted in such terms.

Certainly, great compassion cannot be equated with negative emotional elements like anger or greed. This is made clear in this chapter's discussion, which connects great compassion with the Attributes and Functions of Suchness. Nonetheless, its manifestation can still be interpreted as a type of feeling or emotion. For instance, the *Qixin lun* defines the notion of great compassion as follows: “when the mind sinks (into a state of stillness) or indolence arises, so it no longer delights in virtuous deeds, one is losing great compassion” (心沈沒或起懈怠, 不樂眾善, 遠離大悲). Although this treatise does not use separate terminology related to ‘emotion,’ this description indicates that great compassion is a ‘complex psychological state’ directly experienced by the subject.

Moreover, the manifestation of great compassion is dependent on context and circumstances, encompassing reflection on reality and specific motivations or desires (欲) toward others. These aspects qualify it to be interpreted as a moral feeling or moral emotion. Importantly, this interpretation aligns with the essential meaning implied in the word *bei* (悲). For the quoted passage from the *Qixin lun* referenced here, see Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0582c14-15.

(欲)’ to alleviate the suffering of sentient beings. These states of mind are described as *naturally* manifesting when one deeply seeks enlightenment by being influenced by the pure functions of Suchness, indicating a transformative process where understanding and compassion grow together.³⁹⁶

The explanation of the *Qixin Lun* regarding the inseparable relationship between Suchness and its limitless virtues and wisdom is a continuation of the Tathāgatagarbha thought, emphasizing the non-empty nature (不空) of Tathāgatagarbha. For example, the *Baoxing lun*, referencing the *Shengman jing*, describes non-empty Tathāgatagarbha (不空如來藏) as never departing from the profound dharmas of the Buddha.³⁹⁷ Similarly, the *Buzeng bujian jing* states that the realm of sentient beings (衆生界), which is the Tathāgatagarbha and thereby the Dharmakāya, is not separate from the Buddha's limitless profound virtues (功德) and wisdom.³⁹⁸ The interpretive trend of understanding Suchness, Dharmakāya, or Tathāgatagarbha as endowed with boundless virtues predates the *Qixin Lun*, appearing first in early Tathāgatagarbha scriptures like the *Shengman jing* and the *Buzeng bujian jing*. This understanding was further developed in the *Baoxing lun* and *Qixin Lun*, theoretically linking the virtues of Suchness with practice and

³⁹⁶ “信成就發心者，依何等人、修何等行，得信成就堪能發心？所謂依不定聚眾生，有熏習善根力故，信業果報，能起十善，厭生死苦、欲求無上菩提，得值諸佛，親承供養修行信心，... 復次，信成就發心者，發何等心？略說有三種。云何為三？一者、直心，正念真如法故。二者、深心，樂集一切諸善行故。三者、大悲心，欲拔一切眾生苦故。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0580b18-c09; In his commentary on the *Qixin lun*, Fazang refers to the cultivation of faith as being achieved through “the power of permeation within original enlightenment (本覺內熏之力).” See Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0270b18.

³⁹⁷ “世尊！不空如來藏，過於恒沙不離不脫不異不思議佛法故。” Ratnamati (勒那摩提), trans., the *Baoxing lun* (寶性論), T.31.1611.0840a18-19.

³⁹⁸ “第一義諦者即是眾生界，眾生界者即是如來藏，如來藏者即是法身。舍利弗！如我所說法身義者，過於恒沙，不離不脫、不斷不異、不思議佛法、如來功德智慧。” Bodhiruci (菩提流支), trans., the *Buzeng bujian jing* (不增不減經) T.16.0668.0476a17-22.

Nirvāṇa. The *Qixin Lun*, however, goes further by systematically clarifying this understanding through the distinctive framework, the Three Categories of Greatness: the ontological basis of virtues (體大), the moral characteristics of that basis (相大), and their process of manifestation (用大), offering a deeper exposition of these inherent virtues.

In the explanations of the Three Categories of Greatness within the *Qixin lun*, it is noteworthy that Ground and Attributes are often bound together, frequently appearing as a unified concept (自體相). Conversely, Function is typically distinguished and explained separately after the discussions on Ground and Attributes. This implicitly suggests that the *Qixin lun* conceptually integrates Ground and Attributes from an ontological perspective. Such a descriptive feature aligns with the *Qixin lun*'s exposition on the Three Categories framework, indicating that Attributes are the virtues *inherently complete* within the Ground of Tathāgatagarbha.³⁹⁹ Hence, Attributes can be understood as metaphysical characteristics inherently associated with Tathāgatagarbha, prior to their manifestation in phenomena. This implies the immutability of Attributes, akin to the Ground, as further clarified by the statement in the treatise regarding their universality; it describes no ontological difference between sentient beings and the Buddha concerning both Ground and Attributes.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, Ground and Attributes are essentially inseparable, and unlike Function which manifests phenomenally, Ground and Attributes are inconceivable or ineffable, understood only by the Buddha ultimately. Fazang, in explaining the relationship between Ground and Attributes in the *Qixin Lun*, elucidates that the

³⁹⁹ “二者、相大，謂如來藏具足無量性功德故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0575c26-27.

⁴⁰⁰ “復次，真如自體相者，一切凡夫、聲聞、緣覺、菩薩、諸佛，無有增減，非前際生、非後際滅，畢竟常恒。從本已來，性自滿足一切功德。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0579a12-14.

virtues of Attributes are inseparably linked to Suchness, possessing an ontological status equivalent to it:

In the concluding part, the text elaborates on the innate virtues of Buddha-nature, as vast as grains of sand, inseparable from the true Ground, hence termed 'non-departing (不離).' Because it continues without beginning, it is described as 'uninterrupted (不斷).' Its timeless continuity is described as 'uninterrupted (不斷),' a quality mirrored by the ever-enduring practice of the path. Being identical in essence to the Ground, it is known as 'non-different (不異).' This inseparability, coupled with the profound significance akin to countless grains of sand, renders it 'inconceivable (不思議).' Such profound understanding is exclusive to the Buddha, thus denoted as the 'Dharma of the Buddha,' the realizable Truth. Without these virtues, the Tathāgata, upon realization, would lack completeness. Having realized their true nature and attained all virtues in full, it is confirmed that the Ground inherently embodies virtues as numerous as grains of sand. Consequently, the Ground is acknowledged as wholly fulfilling, lacking nothing.⁴⁰¹

The Tathāgatagarbha, or the True Self, which embodies profound metaphysical characteristics, presents significant ethical distinctions. In Buddhist ethics, a fundamental principle is that moral rightness or goodness cannot emerge from conditioned phenomena. This view resonates across most Buddhist traditions, including that of Tathāgatagarbha philosophy. It is derived from the understanding that anything arising conditionally, following the principle of dependent origination, inevitably leads to subsequent effects and, in turn, contributes to the cycle of birth, death, and Samsāra. In other words, this process perpetuates the cycle of suffering, directly opposing the quintessential Buddhist pursuit of liberation from Samsāra. Therefore, within this framework, conditionally arisen phenomena cannot represent moral rightness or goodness, as they are in conflict with the ultimate goal of liberation. For anything to be

⁴⁰¹ “下結中。謂性德塵沙。不離真體故云不離也。無始相續故云不斷。亦可謂治道不亡也。與體同味故云不異。不異而有恒沙之義故云不思議。唯佛窮達。故云佛法。亦可此是所覺法故也。若此真體無性德者。如來證此不應具德。既證性已萬德圓滿。即驗真如本具恒沙德也。故云滿足無有所少。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0273b28-c06.

considered ethically positive and meaningful, it must, by its nature, possess the potential to sever the chain of karmic circulation—indicating that it is *unconditional*.

In the broader context of ethics, beyond the Buddhist framework, conditionality signifies contingency or chance. Conditions refer to specific events or entities occurring at particular moments within phenomena, grounded in preceding causes and occupying specific spacetime points. Such conditions, therefore, cannot repeat in an identical manner, implying that the causal relationships leading to certain outcomes are unique and non-repetitive. Consequently, the idea of an immutable, necessary link between cause and effect in phenomena does not hold; rather, phenomena are governed by "similar" conditions leading to "similar" outcomes, underscoring the absence of principles that invariably produce identical results. The element of human emotion serves as a prime illustration of the contingent nature of conditionality in phenomena. For instance, an individual without prejudice and with compassion for others may encounter a homeless person on the streets and, despite the latter's rugged appearance, might feel sympathy and be moved to perform an act of charity, depending on their economic situation. Conversely, someone who has had negative experiences with homeless individuals in the past, such as being attacked or insulted, might feel fear or aversion upon encountering a homeless person, even if they are generally altruistic. This divergence in reactions to the same homeless individual arises from the distinct experiential backgrounds functioning as causal conditions in each situation. Attempting to derive a standard for moral judgment from such contingent conditions reveals the inherent difficulty in establishing a clear criterion for what constitutes the morally correct response in a specific situation. This underscores the complexity of moral decision-making when the basis of judgment is rooted in conditions that are inherently variable and dependent on the unique circumstances of each case.

In this context, establishing the foundation of Tathāgatagarbha or Huayan ethics that encompasses both Buddhist and general ethical perspectives necessitates postulating moral principles that are independent of conditions and their recognition, namely *a priori* causes and the principles *necessarily* derived from them. These principles must transcend the individuality of sentient beings, integrating the moral judgment process of sentient beings based on individual experiences into a 'universal' concept. For instance, regardless of their individual experiences, the principle that enables beings to maintain a consistent attitude towards the homeless is essential. Such principles cannot be fully explained by merely postulating metaphysical abstractions; they must possess concrete moral content or, at the very least, be capable of indicating such content. Mere statements of a transcendent or absolute ground for all beings are practically unhelpful in the realm of moral judgment and practice. More crucially, it is not about whether such absolute causes are recognized, but what they are and how they lead sentient beings to proper conclusions in situations requiring moral judgment. From the perspective of Tathāgatagarbha thought, the foundation of moral principles must encompass Ground, Attributes, and Function, fully integrating within the Tathāgatagarbha or Suchness as it was explained in the *Qixin lun*. The traditional Buddhist teachings of non-self and dependent origination, still considered representative of Buddhism today, have been critiqued by nineteenth and twentieth-century Buddhist scholars, as Gethin notes, for seemingly undermining the basis of an agent's subjectivity and morality.⁴⁰² This critique points to a perceived tension between these foundational Buddhist doctrines and the preservation of a basis for moral responsibility and individual agency. The ongoing discussion around non-self and morality highlights the importance of a theoretical framework within Tathāgatagarbha thought that systematically

⁴⁰² Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 160.

includes principles of morality, showcasing its theoretical strength in addressing ethical considerations.

Another ethical advantage gained through the Tathāgatagarbha concept of True Self involves incorporating a more practical process of salvaging others as an essential in its moral principles. There is little disagreement that the traditional non-self teaching not only aims for the practitioner's awakening but also has a practical purpose of liberating sentient beings from suffering. The importance of altruistic practices such as generosity was already emphasized in the Nikāya scriptures, predating Mahāyāna traditions. Nonetheless, some argue for a deeper moral philosophical interpretation of this teaching, as it primarily focuses on an epistemological shift.⁴⁰³ Practices like generosity (布施, *Dāna*), although still significant, are not described as playing an essential role in enlightenment and the fundamental elimination of suffering. For instance, according to the *Dīghajāṇu Sutta* in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, such altruistic practices are recommended for "welfare and happiness in this present life and in future lives," yet they are not closely linked to the ultimate goal of Nirvāṇa.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ As previously examined, the Buddhist tradition encapsulates the origin of suffering within the Four Noble Truths: All formations are impermanent, and all phenomena lack personal identity. Thus, attachment to the empirical self and objects of perception leads to emotional reactions such as craving and aversion, and subsequently to suffering as these objects inevitably disintegrate. This type of suffering, indicated by the concept of *duḥkha*, arises from *conceptual* attachment. Thus, realizing the non-self, or *anātman*, is explained as a fundamental means to achieve Nirvāṇa, liberating oneself from all suffering. The emphasis on an epistemological shift in traditional Buddhist practice is evident in the exposition of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (四念處, *Satipaṭṭhāna*) in the Thirty-Seven Paths to Enlightenment (三十七道品, *Bodhipakṣa dharma*), where mindful attention to one's body, feelings, mind, and phenomena leads to the realization of impermanence and non-self, dispelling ignorance and suffering. See: “「諸比丘！若能彈指間，惟行自身身止觀，外身身止觀，內外身身止觀，分別念解世間癡惱，是為精進，為如佛教，非是愚癡食人施，何況能多行者，撮取其要；若彈指間，止觀痛，若止觀意及止觀法，內外分別念，解世間癡惱，皆如上說，何況多行者；是故可念行四意止。」” An Shigao (安世高), trans., the *Foshuo chanxing sanshiqi pin jing* (佛說禪行三十七品經), T.15.0604.0180c11-17.

⁴⁰⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, 2012), 1194-1197.

At least in relation to these issues, the theory of mind in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, which incorporate the source of altruistic morality into the nature of Suchness itself, actively includes the necessity and justification for practice to salvage others. This theoretical framework enabling such altruistic practice includes the practice of the Perfections (波羅蜜, *pāramitās*), notably Generosity (布施, *dāna*), underpinned by the notion of Great Compassion (大悲心, *mahākaruṇā*). As I discussed above, the *Qixin lun* explains that Great Compassion naturally manifests as one of the three minds upon mature faith in Suchness. The practice of the five perfections (五行), including generous giving, is explicitly advocated not merely for the happiness of the giver or receiver but as a means to accumulate faith in Suchness and achieve Nirvāṇa.⁴⁰⁵ Regardless of whether it was intended, Tathāgatagarbha thought in the *Qixin lun* contributes to establishing a systematic framework for practice that encompasses not only the practitioner's own enlightenment but also a comprehensive teaching for salvaging others within its theories of practice and morality.

One potential question that might arise in analyzing the ethical theory surrounding Tathāgatagarbha thought involves how the virtues inherent in the metaphysically positioned Tathāgatagarbha can manifest phenomenally through the practitioner's mind, given Tathāgatagarbha's ineffability in thought and language. The challenge lies in reconciling Tathāgatagarbha's transcendent purity with its phenomenal manifestation, which seems logically incompatible. This doubt encompasses ontological and epistemological perspectives on the mind, presenting a critical critique Tathāgatagarbha thought might face. The *Qixin lun* and other

⁴⁰⁵ “是中依未入正定眾生故，說修行信心。何等信心？云何修行？... 修行有五門，能成此信。云何為五？一者、施門，二者、戒門，三者、忍門，四者、進門，五者、止觀門。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0581c07-16.

Tathāgatagarbha scriptures do not provide direct answer to this question, but the notion of the Three Categories of Greatness can be suggested as a compelling response. This distinct notion in the *Qixin lun* modifies the traditional dichotomic structure of Ground (體) and Function (用), the metaphysical basis of morality and its manifestation in phenomena, connecting them through the newly added concept of Attributes (相). In so doing, it redefines Function as inheriting the pure characteristic of Ground. This framework aligns with the core understanding of the mind of sentient beings that explains the unchanging (不變) yet causally effective (隨緣) nature of their mind. This approach inevitably carries ontological ambiguity around the Tathāgatagarbha concept, seeding future debates. The moral significance of incorporating Attributes and Function into Tathāgatagarbha lies in ontologically extending the virtues and purity of Tathāgatagarbha to its manifestations, implying that although Suchness' functions need proper conditions to appear and is subject to arising and ceasing, they do not inherently possess the impurity based on arising and ceasing that other dharmas do. This pure Function, aligned with the non-empty nature of Tathāgatagarbha, distinctly separates itself from the arising and ceasing of deluded thoughts driven by ignorance, essentially referring to the process that leads practitioners to enlightenment through purification by Suchness's permeation (淨法緣起).⁴⁰⁶

These characteristics of the Tathāgatagarbha are reflected in the interpretation of "the

⁴⁰⁶ Applying the interpretation of purification based on non-empty Suchness to the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, Bhikku Wonkyung points out as follows: “the non-emptiness of Tathāgatagarbha in the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* highlights the practical aspect of Tathāgatagarbha thought. It emphasizes that since the Tathāgatagarbha is full of excellent qualities more than the sands of the Ganges, it allows sentient beings to achieve the Buddha-body (佛身) through practice based on the causal effects of their Buddha-nature. Without the inherent virtues of the Buddha within the Tathāgatagarbha, practice alone would not yield any virtues. ... The relationship between the principles of Tathāgatagarbha and practice is inseparable, akin to two sides of the same coin.” His explanation aids in understanding the uniqueness of the concept of non-emptiness of Suchness. See Wonkyung, “여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the ‘Tathāgata-garbha Thought],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 29 (2001): 180-181.

inherent purity of the mind and its defilement by external phenomena (心性本淨 客塵所染),” a phrase representing the theory of mind in Mahāyāna tradition.⁴⁰⁷ Dharmas that arise and cease due to conditions are generally considered impure because they manifest due to external conditions (客塵) and contaminate the mind of practitioners. However, the nature of Tathāgatagarbha's Function, though manifested through conditions like practice, faith, and encounters with wise ones (善知識), is distinguished from the illusory arising and ceasing because its fundamental cause (因) is the pure Ground of Tathāgatagarbha itself. This leads to a distinction in the transient arising of phenomena based on Tathāgatagarbha's nature, introducing two categories: ‘Purification by Suchness’s permeation (淨法緣起)’ and ‘Contamination by external conditions (染法緣起).’ Regarding the concept of permeation (熏習), the *Qixin lun* explains as follows:

There are meanings of four types of permeation, and the defiled dharmas (染法) and pure dharmas arise without interruption. What are these four? The first is the pure (淨法) dharma, named Suchness; the second is the source of all defilement, known as ignorance (無明); the third is deluded mind, referred to as karmic consciousness (業識); and the fourth is the realm of delusion, known as the six types of sense-data (六塵). The nature of permeation is like how clothing, inherently without fragrance, becomes fragrant through perfuming. Similarly, the true dharma of Suchness inherently lacks defilement but appears tainted through being permeated by ignorance. Conversely, the defiled dharma of ignorance inherently lacks pure dharmas but

⁴⁰⁷ According to Jongwook Kim, "the inherent purity of the mind and its defilement by external phenomena (心性本淨 客塵所染)" is a characteristic broadly evident in the Mahāyāna tradition, including the Prajñāpāramitā. Yet, outside of Tathāgatagarbha thought, other Mahāyāna traditions focus solely on the emptiness of the mind itself without extensively exploring its function. This suggests that even identical expressions can be interpreted differently across various Mahāyāna traditions, indicating a diversity of understanding regarding the nature and operational aspects of the mind. See Jongwook Kim, “무아에서 진아까지: 불교 무아 개념의 형성과 전개 [From Non-self to True Self: The Formation and Development of the Buddhist Concept of Non-self],” *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 43 (2006): 115.

undergoes the function of purification (淨用) through being permeated by Suchness.⁴⁰⁸

The term permeation (熏習) is a metaphorical expression of arising and ceasing grounded in human cognitive activities, indicating the directional influence of conditions and karma. The passage from the *Qixin lun* identifies four sources (因) causing permeation. However, its following explanations reveal that the deluded mind (妄心) and perceptible realms (妄境界) are consequentially arising from the fundamental ignorance, sharing a similar nature.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, ignorance is the ultimate source of defiled arising, whereas the inherently pure dharma of Suchness is the fundamental ground for reverting the contaminated mind back to purity.⁴¹⁰ As described in the *Qixin lun*, the Function of Suchness, grounded in its inherent pure nature, *naturally* propels sentient beings towards disliking the suffering of cyclic existence and seeking Nirvāṇa. Realizing the illusory nature of sensory experiences leads to overcoming afflictions and ignorance, transforming towards purity, and ultimately achieving the final awakening. This process of purification is termed as “accomplishing the natural karma (自然業)” in the *Qixin*

⁴⁰⁸ “復次，有四種法熏習義故，染法、淨法起不斷絕。云何為四？一者、淨法，名為真如。二者、一切染因，名為無明。三者、妄心，名為業識。四者、妄境界、所謂六塵。熏習義者，如世間衣服實無於香，若人以香而熏習故則有香氣。此亦如是，真如淨法實無於染，但以無明而熏習故則有染相。無明染法實無淨業，但以真如而熏習故則有淨用。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0578a14-21.

⁴⁰⁹ “云何熏習起染法不斷？所謂以依真如法故有於無明，以有無明染法因故即熏習真如；以熏習故則有妄心，以有妄心即熏習無明。不了真如法故，不覺念起現妄境界。以有妄境界染法緣故，即熏習妄心，令其念著造種種業，受於一切身心等苦。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0578a21-27.

⁴¹⁰ Chongsik Chun divides the reasons why the virtues derived from Suchness are inherently pure into three categories: 1) The nature of Suchness itself is pure. 2) The permeation power of Suchness is also pure. 3) This permeation power has the function to direct sentient beings towards purity, opposing contamination. Accordingly, just as Suchness is uninterrupted, so too is the functioning of its pure permeation, which cannot be discontinued. See Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교* (The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening of Faith by Wonhyo and Fazang) (Seoul: Yehak, 2006), 365-366.

lun.⁴¹¹ The power of Suchness's permeation (熏習力) is inherently *given* to all beings, preceding their efforts or capabilities. While effort and practice are important in the journey to Nirvāṇa, the point that the power of permeation naturally functions is fundamentally due to possessing Suchness. Therefore, citing from the *Niepan jing*, Fazang comments that even the icchantikas (闍提) will in the future be able to return to their original roots of goodness (善根), attributing this to the power of Buddha-nature's permeation.⁴¹² In summary, the function of the mind's purification based on the pure Ground and Attributes of Suchness is expressed as 'permeation by Suchness.' This may explain why in the *Qixin lun*, the character for Function (用) is specifically used to describe the Purification by Suchness's permeation, but not used in the context of Contamination by external conditions, possibly indicating a deliberate choice of terminology.

The *Qixin lun* proposes two modes of the purification by Suchness that illustrate how the attainment of morality within Tathāgatagarbha thought is, in some respects, inevitable. These two modes, the "Permeation based on Ground and Attributes (自體相熏習)" and "Permeation based on Function (用熏習)," both rest on the foundation of Suchness. According to the *Qixin lun*, Permeation based on Ground and Attributes refers to the inherent pure virtues of Suchness, such as the 'dharma devoid of karmic influx (無漏法, *anāsravaḥ-dharma*)' and the 'inconceivable

⁴¹¹ “云何熏習起淨法不斷？所謂以有真如法故能熏習無明，以熏習因緣力故，則令妄心厭生死苦、樂求涅槃。以此妄心有厭求因緣故，即熏習真如。自信己性，知心妄動無前境界，修遠離法，以如實知無前境界故，種種方便起隨順行，不取不念，乃至久遠熏習力故，無明則滅。以無明滅故心無有起，以無起故境界隨滅，以因緣俱滅故心相皆盡，名得涅槃成自然業。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0578b06-15.

⁴¹² “二有淨用者。此是生滅門中本覺真如。故有熏義。真如門中則無此義。由此本覺內熏不覺。令成厭求。返流順真。故云用也。此釋經中由有如來藏故能厭生死苦。樂求涅槃也。涅槃經云。闍提之人未來佛性力故。還生善根。彼言佛性力者。即此本覺內熏之力耳。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0270b12-18.

karmic function (不思議業).⁴¹³ Fazang's commentary suggests that these concepts imply the ineffability of the non-empty nature of Buddha-nature and its operational process.⁴¹³ Through the inconceivable function, which is based on the dharmas devoid of karmic influx, sentient beings are led to dislike suffering and observe the world correctly, embodying the superior wisdom inherent in Suchness. Moreover, because these virtues serve as a constant impetus, individuals come to believe in the True Dharma within themselves and are thus inspired to cultivate the aspiration (發心) towards enlightenment.⁴¹⁴ These virtues are the internal correct causes (正因) leading beings to enlightenment.⁴¹⁵ Similar explanations are found in the *Baowang rulai xingqi pin* (寶王如來性起品) of the 60-fascicle *Huayan jing*, indicating the possible influence of the

Huayan jing on the formation of *Qixin lun*'s Tathāgatagarbha thought:

⁴¹³ “言從無始乃至不思業者。不空本覺名無漏法。此法冥熏眾生。非物能了。故云不思業也。此中業者。是冥熏作用也。作境界性者。明非直熏彼妄心令其厭求成能觀智。亦乃與其觀智作所觀境界也。以此二法等者下顯熏功能。謂此心境二法。亦可此體相二法。冥熏眾生有力故。令起厭求等行。自信等者。明依熏起修行之相也。” Ibid., T.44.1846.0271 c14-21; According to Chongsik Chun's interpretation, the wisdom that arises from relying on Suchness of beings in a state of contaminated mind refers to the wisdom of "initial awakening (始覺)." See Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교* (The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening of Faith by Wonhyo and Fazang) (Seoul: Yehak, 2006), 394.

⁴¹⁴ As the *Qixin Lun*'s concept of the Four Faiths (四信) specifies, faith in Suchness, the Buddha, the true Dharma, and the Sangha is fundamentally required for fostering the aspiration (發心) towards enlightenment. This principle is similarly emphasized in other texts, such as the *Baoxing Lun*. Interestingly, the *Qixin Lun* introduces the notion of external permeation (外熏), attributing the foundation of sentient beings' faith directly to the influence of Suchness. This implies that possessing Suchness assures that they will eventually embrace faith in the true Dharma. Hence, the basis and process for Nirvāṇa is intrinsically embedded within Suchness. For further exploration about the importance of faith in the *Baoxing lun*, see: Douglas Duckworth, "Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism," in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 241.

⁴¹⁵ “真如熏習義有二種。云何為二？一者、自體相熏習，二者、用熏習。自體相熏習者，從無始世來，具無漏法備，有不思議業，作境界之性。依此二義恒常熏習，以有力故，能令眾生厭生死苦、樂求涅槃，自信己身有真如法，發心修行。問曰：「若如是義者，一切眾生悉有真如，等皆熏習，云何有信、無信，無量前後差別？皆應一時自知有真如法，勤修方便等入涅槃。」答曰：「真如本一，而有無量無邊無明，從本已來自性差別厚薄不同故。過恒沙等上煩惱依無明起差別，我見愛染煩惱依無明起差別。如是一切煩惱，依於無明所起，前後無量差別，唯如來能知故。又諸佛法有因有緣，因緣具足乃得成辦。如木中火性是火正因，若無人知，不假方便能自燒木，無有是處。眾生亦爾，雖有正因熏習之力，若不值遇諸佛菩薩善知識等以之為緣，能自斷煩惱入涅槃者，則無是處。」 Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0578b19-c08.

From the moment the sun illuminates the world, beings blind from birth are unable to perceive its light, owing to their absence of sight. Yet, these blind beings still reap the benefits of sunlight, obtaining nourishment and tools essential for life, dispelling coldness and moisture to lighten their bodies, and healing ailments such as chills, phlegm, and sores, thus attaining peace and joy. In a similar vein, the sun of the Tathagata's wisdom bathes the world in its radiance. However, it remains invisible to those who have been metaphorically blind since birth due to erroneous views, the violation of precepts, ignorance, and improper conduct, because they lack the eye of faith. Nevertheless, even these beings, though blind to the radiant wisdom of the Tathagata, still gain from its presence, as it eradicates all suffering associated with the Four Great Elements (四大), brings comfort to the body, and cuts off the roots of all mental afflictions and the Three Poisons (三毒).⁴¹⁶

More fascinating than Permeation based on Ground and Attributes is the explanation of the second type of purification, namely, Permeation based on Function. According to the *Qixin lun*, this permeation serves as the force that constitutes external conditions (外緣) for sentient beings. For example, it manifests in countless forms of external conditions, such as virtuous friends (善知識), aligning with each being's specific circumstances and situations, thereby aiding them through the active functions of Suchness. This external influence motivates those who have not commenced their practice to start and supports those yet to attain enlightenment in reaching their goal, occasionally manifesting in the form of the practitioners' family or friends to help.⁴¹⁷ While the manifestation of Function adopts the forms of external conditions, it does not suggest that Suchness harbors supernatural or mystical powers. In fact, this is in line with the

⁴¹⁶ “「復次，佛子！譬如日出世間，生盲眾生未曾覩見。何以故？無肉眼故。佛子！此生盲眾生雖不見日，亦為日光之所饒益；因日光故，而得飲食、資生眾具，消除冷、溼，令體輕軟，風、寒、痰、瘡、諸患悉除，安隱快樂；如來慧日出現世間，亦復如是，一切邪見、犯戒、無智、邪命生盲眾生，未曾覩佛智慧日光。何以故？無信心眼故。佛子！生盲眾生，雖不見如來智慧日光，然此眾生，亦為如來智慧日光之所饒益；除滅四大一切諸苦，身體安樂，斷一切煩惱、毒痛根本。” Buddhabhadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., *Dafangguang fo Huayan jing* (大方廣佛華嚴經), T.09.0278.0616b29-c11.

⁴¹⁷ “用熏習者，即是眾生外緣之力。如是外緣有無量義，略說二種。云何為二？一者、差別緣，二者、平等緣。差別緣者，此人依於諸佛菩薩等，從初發意始求道時乃至得佛，於中若見若念，或為眷屬父母諸親，或為給使，或為知友，或為怨家，或起四攝，乃至一切所作無量行緣，以起大悲熏習之力，能令眾生增長善根，若見若聞得利益故。此緣有二種。云何為二？一者、近緣，速得度故。二者、遠緣，久遠得度故。是近遠二緣，分別復有二種。云何為二？一者、增長行緣，二者、受道緣。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0578c15-c25.

understanding from the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the *Qixin lun*, where phenomena are perceived as mental activities, and such recognized forms are accepted by practitioners as 'existent' entities. The Permeation based on Function refers to those entities among the phenomena that are manifested based solely on the functions of Suchness, that is, those correctly recognized by the pure wisdom of Suchness. Hence, the *Qixin lun* articulates that this externally manifested permeation is founded on the power of Suchness's wisdom (同體智力), and it can be correctly understood by sentient beings only when they enter deep meditation (三昧) and observe it.⁴¹⁸

In summary, the pure function of Suchness serves both as an internal cause and external condition for sentient beings, guiding them to achieve the Buddhist path of altruism and awakening (自利利他). This pure force, based on the Tathāgatagarbha, is considered the source of 'good deeds (善業)' and thus is not described as 'empty.' This function is continuous, allowing all beings to eventually attain Buddhahood in the end, whether in the near or distant future. Notably, within the understanding of Tathāgatagarbha, the function of Buddha-nature is not only for the moment of future enlightenment but also operates *homiostatically* across past, present, and future. This is logically valid because, without the constancy of Buddha-nature's function, it would have to be considered as changing or subject to appearance and cessation. Moreover, the immutability and consistent function of the Buddha-nature ensure a connection between sentient beings and

⁴¹⁸ “平等緣者，一切諸佛菩薩，皆願度脫一切眾生，自然熏習恒常不捨。以同體智力故，隨應見聞而現作業。所謂眾生依於三昧，乃得平等見諸佛故。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0578c26-29; Although more concise than the *Qixin lun*, the *Foxing lun* also presents a similar argument related to wisdom. According to this treatise, emptiness possesses a function that enables the achievement of wisdom and compassion, and through this emptiness, attaining the realm of the Dharmakāya is possible. For the English translation of the specific passage from the *Foxing lun* that discusses this, refer to: Sallie B. King, “Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person,” *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 153.

Buddhas, making the claim of 'equivalence of Buddha-nature in sentient beings and Buddhas' plausible within Tathāgatagarbha thought.⁴¹⁹ Even if obscured by ignorance and afflictions, the Buddha-nature's function should be understood to persistently operate.

As previously examined, the path toward enlightenment in Tathāgatagarbha thought necessarily pursues both self-benefit and the benefit of others. When considered together, the theory of the permeation in the *Qixin lun* reveals that the achievement of morality is already justified on a metaphysical foundation within Tathāgatagarbha thought. That is, all deeds aimed at actively helping others are directed and prompted by the purity of Suchness. As Sally King points out, in Tathāgatagarbha thought, Suchness is not a mere entitative concept but an *active* one that propels practitioners to continue their efforts, thereby invoking good deeds.⁴²⁰ Within this theoretical framework, the achievement of Nirvāṇa and morality are not seen as separate goals. These ethical points can certainly be regarded as distinctive characteristics of Tathāgatagarbha thought.

3.4.3 The Reception and Development of the Ethical Implications of Tathāgatagarbha Thought within the Chinese Huayan Tradition

The philosophical implications of Tathāgatagarbha thought were most actively adopted and developed into a unique theoretical form within the Huayan tradition. Tracing the process of this theoretical transference, it appears that there is general agreement in existing research on the prehistory of the Huayan tradition that Tathāgatagarbha thought, along with the consciousness

⁴¹⁹ Douglas Duckworth, "Buddha-Nature and the Logic of Pantheism," in *The Buddhist World*, edited by John Powers (London: Routledge, 2015), 240~241.

⁴²⁰ Sallie B. King, "Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person," *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 158.

theories from the Shelun (攝論) and Dilun (地論) traditions, exerted the most significant influence on the establishment of the Huayan tradition.⁴²¹ The Dilun tradition is identified as having evolved within the Chinese Buddhist milieu, particularly through its engagement with the *Daśabhūmikā-vibhāṣā* (十地經論), which is Vasubandhu’s commentary on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (十地經), and scriptures such as the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (楞伽經), thriving in northern China from 510 to 580.⁴²² This tradition is commonly viewed as a distinct stream of Chinese Buddhism, initiated by the comprehensive work of Huiguang (慧光, 468-537) on the *Daśabhūmikā-vibhāṣā* that was translated separately by Ratnamati (勒那摩提) and Bodhiruci (菩提流支). Not only in Huayan, the Dilun tradition is also considered a crucial antecedent to various Chinese Buddhist traditions because the intellectual and dharma lineages of traditions established after the 7th century can be traced back to Dilun masters (地論師). For instance, the teachings of consciousness and meditation practices of Huisi (慧思), Tiantai Zhiyi’s (智顛) mentor, are acknowledged to have been influenced by the Dilun tradition. The second patriarch of the Huayan tradition, Zhiyan (智儼), also learned from the Dilun masters. Despite its importance, research into the Dilun tradition

⁴²¹ Imre Hamar, “The Huayan Understanding of One-mind and Buddhist Practice on the Basis of the Awakening of Faith,” *Journal of East Asian Cultures*, 2023, no.2: 41-43; Gilam Seok, “한국에 있어서 화엄학 연구의 흐름과 전망 [A Study of Development and Prospect of Huayan Study in Korea],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 68 (2013): 294.

⁴²² The *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, corresponding to the ‘Ten Stages chapter (十地品)’ of the *Huayan Jing* (華嚴經), was introduced to China in seven versions translated by figures such as Dharmarakṣa (竺法護) who was active in the late 3rd century. Despite this early introduction, the Chinese Huayan School, which places significant emphasis on the Ten Stages chapter, was not established until the Tang dynasty. According to Pyongrae Lee, this delay was due to the crucial influence of Tathāgatagarbha thought, formed through discussions within the Dilun and Shelun traditions, on the formation of the Huayan School. For more details, please refer to the following: Pyongrae Lee, “화엄교학의 기초로서의 여래장설에 관한 연구 (Research on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory as the Foundation of Huayan Buddhism),” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 13 (1996): 107-130.

has been relatively sparse, likely due to the scarcity of surviving texts until recently. The Dilun school was known to have existed, but understanding of its philosophy or literature was less comprehensive compared to other traditions. The discovery of Dilun-related texts among the Dunhuang (燉煌) manuscripts in the 1980s, however, has injected new vitality into the study of Dilun thought.

One of the most prominent issues within the Dilun School was the understanding of *ālaya-vijñāna*, leading to a division of this school into the Southern (南道派) and Northern factions (北道派).⁴²³ The Southern faction, led by figures such as Huiguang and Fashang (法上, 495-580), who primarily followed Ratnamati's (勒那摩提) views, was influenced by the four-volume version of the *Lengjia jing* (楞伽經), advocating the eight consciousnesses model and considering *ālaya-vijñāna* as a pure consciousness.⁴²⁴ On the other hand, the masters in the Northern faction such as Daochong (道寵) and Sengxiu (僧休), following Bodhiruci's interpretation, were influenced by the ten-volume version of the *Lengjia jing*, positing a ninth pure consciousness, *amala-vijñāna* (阿摩羅識), and viewing *ālaya-vijñāna* as a consciousness combined with delusion. The intensity of the debate between these two factions can be inferred from Zhanran's (湛然) records describing them as being as incompatible as water and fire.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ According to Pyongrae Lee, the reason the Dilun School split into the Southern and Northern factions was due to the existence of two major roads leading to Luoyang (洛陽) at that time, each splitting to the south and north. The two factions, residing at the southern and northern passages respectively, came to be known as the Southern and Northern factions. For more details on the formation and division of the Dilun School, see *Ibid.*, 117-120.

⁴²⁴ Zhiyi describes the understanding of *ālaya-vijñāna* within the Dilun and Shelun Schools as follows: “若地人明阿黎耶是真常淨識攝；大乘人云是無記、無明、隨眠之識，亦名無沒識，九識乃名淨識互諍(云云)。” Zhiyi (智顓), *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* (妙法蓮華經玄義), T.33.1716.0744b20-22.

⁴²⁵ “初文云「如地論有南北二道」者，陳梁已前弘地論師二處不同，相州北道計阿黎耶以為依持，相州南道計於真如以為

When Emperor Wu (武帝) of the Northern Zhou (北周) dynasty implemented Buddhist persecution in 574, Dilun monks from the north fled to the Jiankang (建康) region in the south. The perspective on ālaya-vijñāna held by the Northern faction of the Dilun School was very similar to that of the Shelun School, established by Paramārtha (真諦, 499-569), who translated the *Qixin lun* into Chinese. Possibly due to these doctrinal similarities, they naturally came into contact with Paramārtha's disciples there and were absorbed into the Shelun School.

The Shelun tradition began with Paramārtha's translations of Asaṅga's (無着, 300-390?) *Mahāyāna-samgraha* (攝大乘論) and Vasubandhu's (世親, 316-396) commentary on the *Mahāyāna-samgraha* (攝大乘論釋). Proponents of this tradition considered the ālaya-vijñāna to possess the aspect of ignorance and posited a ninth consciousness, the amala-vijñāna, as permanently pure. According to this theoretical structure, ceasing the ālaya-vijñāna through practice directly leads to the cessation of afflictions, which in turn means realizing the amala-vijñāna.⁴²⁶ This aligns with Paramārtha's translation in the *Jueding zang lun* (決定藏論), stating, "To practice and cease the ālaya-vijñāna is to transform the nature of the ordinary person (凡夫性), and to discard the dharmas of the ordinary person means the extinction of the ālaya-vijñāna. Its extinction implies the elimination of all afflictions, signifying the restoration of the ālaya-vijñāna and the attainment of the amala-vijñāna."⁴²⁷ Furthermore, this logic of transforming the ālaya-vijñāna

依持，此二論師俱稟天親，而所計各異同於水火。” Zhanran (湛然), *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* (法華玄義釋籤), T.33.1717.0942c17-21.

⁴²⁶ For a detailed argument on the philosophical characteristics of the Shelun School, refer to the following: Pyongrae Lee, “화엄교학의 기초로서의 여래장설에 관한 연구 (Research on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory as the Foundation of Huayan Buddhism),” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 13 (1996): 119-121.

⁴²⁷ “修習行故斷阿羅耶識，即轉凡夫性、捨凡夫法阿羅耶識滅，此識滅故一切煩惱滅。阿羅耶識對治故，證阿摩羅識

through practice and restoring it to its pure nature aligns with the theoretical framework used to explain the ālaya-vijñāna in another of Paramārtha's translations, the *Qixin lun*. This demonstrates that the core teachings of the Shelun tradition have a close relationship with the Tathāgatagarbha thought, which significantly influenced various Chinese Buddhist schools, including Huayan and Chan.

The Tathāgatagarbha thought developed by Paramārtha and his disciples within the Shelun tradition was subsequently adopted by Huiyuan (慧遠) of Jingying temple (淨影寺), a prominent figure in the Southern faction of the Dilun School. Huiyuan is renowned as the author of the *Dasheng qixin lun yishu* (大乘起信論義疏), one of the three major commentaries on the *Qixin lun*. According to Pyongrae Lee, Huiyuan's development of his theory of consciousness heavily relies on the Tathāgatagarbha teachings rather than Xuanzang's Yogācāra teachings. For example, Huiyuan lists alternative names for the eight consciousnesses: 1) ignorance-consciousness (無明識), 2) karma-consciousness (業識), 3) transforming-consciousness (轉識), 4) manifesting-consciousness (現識), 5) wisdom-consciousness (智識), 6) continuum-consciousness (相續識), 7) delusive-consciousness (妄識), and 8) grasping-consciousness (執識). This demonstrates his adoption of terms from the *Qixin lun* rather than traditional Yogācāra texts.⁴²⁸ Moreover, in his work the *Dasheng yizhang* (大乘義章), he introduces alternative names for the ālaya-vijñāna, defining it as both 'pure Suchness-consciousness (淨識 or 眞如識)' and 'storehouse-

。 ” Paramārtha (眞諦), trans., the *Jueding zang lun* (決定藏論), T.30.1584.1020b09-12.

⁴²⁸ Pyongrae Lee, “화엄교학의 기초로서의 여래장설에 관한 연구 (Research on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory as the Foundation of Huayan Buddhism),” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 13 (1996): 126-127.

consciousness (藏識 or 家識).⁴²⁹ These points indicate his understanding of the ālaya-vijñāna not merely as a pure consciousness but also as the basis of illusory manifestations. This signifies an alteration from the previous interpretation of the ālaya-vijñāna by the Southern faction of the Dilun School, which solely considered it as pure, suggesting that Huiyuan's understanding was significantly influenced by the Shelun tradition, especially the Tathāgatagarbha thought in the *Qixin lun*.

Among the Huayan patriarchs, the figure who directly connected with the thought of the Dilun School's Southern faction, as thus formed, was Zhiyan (智儼, 602–668), the second patriarch of the Huayan tradition and credited with laying the foundations of Huayan philosophy. According to Fazang's *Huayan jing zhuanji* (華嚴經傳記), Dushun (杜順, 557–640), the first patriarch of Huayan and Zhiyan's mentor, personally obtained permission from Zhiyan's parents for his ordination. Zhiyan was then sent to Zhixiang temple (至相寺), where, rather than studying directly under Dushun, he learned about the *She dasheng lun* (攝大乘論, *Mahāyānasamgraha*) and Huayan teachings from monks who were either residing or visiting there.⁴³⁰ This biographical detail suggests Zhiyan's understanding of Huayan philosophy could be profoundly influenced by the individuals present at Zhixiang temple at that time. A notable point in this

⁴²⁹ “阿梨耶者。此方正翻名為無沒。雖在生死。不失沒故。隨義傍翻。名別有八。一名藏識。如來之藏為此識故。是以經言。如來之藏名為藏識。以此識中涵含法界恒沙佛法故名為藏。又為空義所覆藏故。亦名為藏。二名聖識。出生大聖之所用故。三名第一義識。以殊勝故。故楞伽經。說之以為第一義心。四名淨識。亦名無垢識。體不染故。故經說為自性淨心。五名真識。體非妄故。六名真如識。論自釋言。心之體性無所破故。名之為真。無所立故說以為如。七名家識。亦名宅識。是虛妄法所依處故。八名本識。與虛妄心為根本故。名別如是。” Huiyuan (慧遠), the *Dasheng yizhang* (大乘義章), T.44.1851.0524c18-0525a01.

⁴³⁰ Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan jing zhuanji* (華嚴經傳記), T.51.2073.0163b18-164b13.

conjecture is that Zhixiang temple forming a branch of the Dilun School's Southern faction.⁴³¹ Indeed, the *Huayan jing zhuanji* mentions that Zhiyan studied Huiguang's commentary on *Huayan jing* (*Huayan jing shu* 華嚴經疏) from Zhizheng (智正), a descendant of Huiguang's Southern faction.⁴³² Consequently, some scholars place Zhiyan within the lineage of the Dilun School's Southern faction, thereby highlighting the interconnectedness among the early Chinese Buddhist schools and their significant contributions to the development of Huayan thought.⁴³³

The influence of the Dilun and Shelun Schools on the establishment of the Huayan School is also revealed through the texts that Huayan patriarchs primarily referenced. The *Huayan jing*, which encompasses a vast array of Buddhist teachings, was of course considered by Huayan masters as the most important for their teachings. However, they also heavily relied on the *Qixin lun* as a theoretical framework not only for interpreting this sutra but also for philosophically developing their Huayan thought. This tendency becomes particularly prominent starting from Fazang (法藏, 643–712), the third patriarch of Huayan. He authored one of the three principal commentaries on the *Qixin lun*, the *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), which exerted the most significant influence on subsequent interpretations of the treatise. Although the fourth patriarch, Chengguan (澄觀, 738-839), and the fifth patriarch, Zongmi (宗密, 780–840), did not leave commentaries on the *Qixin lun*, they extensively utilized explanations from this treatise

⁴³¹ Gilam Seok, “화엄종 성립에 있어서 삼계교의 문제 [The Sanjiejiao school (三階教) related to the formation of the Huayan school],” *불교연구* (佛敎研究) 37 (2012): 155.

⁴³² “得華嚴第一。即於當寺智正法師下。聽受此經。雖閱舊聞。常懷新致。炎涼亟改。未革所疑。遂遍覽藏經。討尋眾釋。傳光統律師文疏。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan jing zhuanji* (華嚴經傳記), T.51.2073.0163c09-12.

⁴³³ Gilam Seok, “화엄종 성립에 있어서 삼계교의 문제 [The Sanjiejiao school (三階教) related to the formation of the Huayan school],” *불교연구* (佛敎研究) 37 (2012): 156.

in their commentaries on the *Huayan Jing* and the *Yuanjue Jing* (圓覺經).⁴³⁴ This trend in Chinese Huayan scholarship continues to this day, making the *Qixin lun* and its Tathāgatagarbha thought essential references for those studying it.

How much the Huayan patriarchs valued the *Qixin lun* is also evident in their presented *panjiao* (判教 or *jiaoxiang panshi* 教相判釋), namely, the classification of Buddha's teaching. *Panjiao*, introduced not only by Huayan patriarchs but also by patriarchs of other sects like Tiantai Zhiyi between the fifth and ninth centuries, refers to a systematic classification of various Buddhist scriptures and interpretations, often based on their supported principal teachings. After the Han dynasty, with the introduction of various Buddhist texts to China, the huge volume of these texts sometimes appeared to contain inconsistencies. This led to a demand among scholars of the time for a consistent understanding of these vast texts. *Panjiao* emerged in this context as an intellectual attempt to systematically comprehend the diverse teachings of the Buddha.⁴³⁵ However, it's important to note that besides this intent, there is sometimes a political motive based on the author's sectarian stance. While they did not deny that all teachings presented in *panjiao* are the true teachings of Buddha, they assumed differences in the capacities of learning (根機) among practitioners.⁴³⁶ Therefore, evaluations of various Buddhist traditions and teachings

⁴³⁴ Imre Hamar, "The Huayan Understanding of One-mind and Buddhist Practice on the Basis of the Awakening of Faith," *Journal of East Asian Cultures*, 2023, no.2: 42-43.

⁴³⁵ According to Zhengchi Shi (釋正持), Huiguang from the Dilun School is among the early scholars credited with establishing *panjiao*. Additionally, figures such as Kuiji, Zhiyi, Dushun, and Zhiyan also contributed to forming such classifications within the mainstream Buddhist sects of the time, including the Weishi, Tiantai, and Huayan traditions. See, Zhengchi Shi, "華嚴宗五教判起源與五教十宗 (The Origin and Classification of the Five Teachings and Ten Schools within the Huayan Tradition)," *Dazhuan Xuesheng Foxue Lunwen Ji* (大專學生佛學論文集) 18 (Taipei: Huayan Lianshe, August 2008): 1-2; also see: Liu Ming-wood, "The P'an-chiao System of the Hua-yen School in Chinese Buddhism," *T'oung Pao* LXVII (1981): 11

⁴³⁶ Such a radical interpretation of the differences in learners' capacities is also manifested in the view that there is a depth difference among the teachings within the classifications. According to Zhengchi Shi, Fazang's classifications also reflect this view. See, Zhengchi Shi, "華嚴宗五教判起源與五教十宗 (The Origin and Classification of the Five

presented in them must be critically assessed regarding objectivity and factualness. Nevertheless, these classifications are sometimes helpful for understanding what the authors themselves valued in their followed teachings, as they provide a comparative analysis of various traditions and teachings. For example, in Fazang's case, he presented two types of *panjiao*:⁴³⁷ One of which, centered around the teachings of Mahāyāna, is described in his commentary *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記) as the Classification of Four Teachings (四教).⁴³⁸ There, he lists "the tenet of grasping at characteristics in accord with phenomena (隨相法執宗)," "the tenet that assembles phenomena to reveal the principle of emptiness (真空無相宗)," and "the tenet that brings forth the differences of phenomena based on the principle of emptiness (唯識法相宗)," referring to the Indian Buddhist tradition, the teachings of Madhyamaka, and Xuanzang's Weishi (唯識) tradition, respectively.⁴³⁹ Then, he places at the highest position the teaching based on Tathāgatagarbha

Teachings and Ten Schools within the Huayan Tradition)," *Dazhuan Xuesheng Foxue Lunwen Ji* (大專學生佛學論文集) 18 (Taipei: Huayan Lianshe, August 2008):1-2.

⁴³⁷ Zhengchi Shi, in his research on Fazang's classifications, provides a detailed introduction to the writings of those generally considered as three significant predecessors who greatly influenced the formation of Fazang's classifications: Dushun, Zhiyan, and Zhiyi. Furthermore, he analyzes that Fazang's classifications were also influenced by Huiguang of the Dilun School and Kuiji of the Weishi tradition. Regarding the philosophical characteristics of Fazang's classifications, he points out that they inherit the teachings of Paramārtha's Shelun School. See, *Ibid.*, 2-15.

⁴³⁸ “第二隨教辨宗者。現今東流一切經論，通大小乘，宗途有四。一隨相法執宗，即小乘諸部是也，二真空無相宗，即般若等經，中觀等論所說是也，三唯識法相宗，即解深密等經，瑜伽等論所說是也，四如來藏緣起宗，即楞伽密嚴等經，起信寶性等論所說是也。此四之中，初則隨事執相說，二則會事顯理說，三則依理起事差別說，四則理事融通無礙說，以此宗中許如來藏隨緣成阿賴耶識，此則理徹於事也，亦許依他緣起無性同如，此則事徹於理也。又此四宗，初則小乘諸師所立，二則龍樹提婆所立，三是無著世親所立，四是馬鳴堅慧所立。然此四宗亦無前後時限差別，於諸經論亦有交參之處。宜可准知。今此論宗意當第四門也。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0243b22-c08.

⁴³⁹ For the translation of these four classifications, refer to: Dirk Vorenkamp, *An English Translation of Fa-Tsang's Commentary on the Awakening of Faith*, Studies in Asian Thought and Religion Vol. 28 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 42; Vorenkamp's translation of the name for the Weishi tradition appears problematic, as the term "emptiness" likely carries a different implication than in the preceding tenet. Specifically, "the principle of emptiness" within this tenet actually refers to *ālaya-vijñāna* within the context of consciousness-only thought, or Weishi (唯識).

thought in the *Qixin lun*, "the tenet of the unobstructed interfusing and interpenetration of phenomena and the principle of emptiness (如來藏緣起宗)."⁴⁴⁰ Considering Fazang's pivotal role in the intellectual history of Chinese Huayan philosophy, the composition of such *panjiao* shows how important the teachings of the *Qixin lun* were to the Huayan patriarchs.⁴⁴¹ Fazang's emphasis on Tathāgatagarbha thought is evident not only in his classifications but also in other writings related to practice. For example, in the *Wangjin huanyuan guan* (妄盡還源觀), he almost entirely adopts the logic of Two Aspects within One mind (一心二門) theory from the *Qixin lun*.⁴⁴² In summary, the Huayan tradition is believed to have formed by adopting Tathāgatagarbha

⁴⁴⁰ As can be inferred from his status as a patriarch of the Huayan School, Fazang intentionally places Huayan teachings at the highest position among all teachings in his famous Five-Teachings classification (五教). Similarly, in his Four-Teachings classification, placing the Tathāgatagarbha thought, closely associated with Huayan, at the top seems consistent with this intention. Notably, in the Four-Teachings classification, he refers to Xuanzang's Weishi tradition as a derogatory term '*Faxiang zong* (法相宗),' indicating Fazang considered the then-flourishing Weishi school a formidable challenge. For a critique of Fazang's intentions hidden within these classifications, refer to the following: Seunghak Koh, "화엄 교학에서의 연기 개념 [The concept of Dependent Origination in Huayan Scholasticism]," *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 37 (2013): 133; Yoonyoung Min, "<華嚴五教章>의 教判을 통해 본 事事無碍의 위치와 의미 [A Reexamination of the Position and Meaning of the principle of the non-obstruction of particular-phenomena and particular-phenomena (事事無碍)]," *Tae-dong Yearly Review of Classics* 23 (2007): 230; For a discussion on the tension between Zhiyan and Fazang towards Xuanzang's Weishi tradition, refer to the following: Imre Hamar, "The Huayan Understanding of One-mind and Buddhist Practice on the Basis of the Awakening of Faith," *Journal of East Asian Cultures*, 2023, no.2: 42-43; For an exploration of the differences between *xing* (性) and *xiang* (相) in Fazang's works, refer to the following: Imre Hamar, "A Huayan Paradigm for the Classification of Mahāyāna Teachings: The Origin and Meaning of *Faxiangzong* and *Faxingzong*," in *Reflecting Mirrors: Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 208-217; Some scholars interpret the background of the tension between Zhiyan and Fazang towards Xuanzang's Weishi as being rooted in the debate and conflict between the old Yogācāra (舊唯識), represented by the Dilun and Shelun schools, and the new Yogācāra (新唯識), represented by Xuanzang's Weishi tradition, regarding the issue of *gotra* (種性). See Cheonhak Kim, "법장의 화엄교분기 종성론에 대한 균여의 이해 [Kyun-nyo's Understanding of the Theory of Zhongxing (種性 gotra) in Fazang's *Huayanjiaofenji* (華嚴教分記)]," *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 25 (2010): 52-54.

⁴⁴¹ For an in-depth exploration of the process by which Fazang deepened the Huayan doctrine and his status within the East Asian Huayan tradition, refer to the following: Cheonhak Kim, "동아시아 화엄사상에서 의상과 법장의 위상 [The Status of Uisang and Fazang in East Asian Huayan Studies]," *불교학보* (佛教學報) 61 (2012): 75-83

⁴⁴² Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 161-162.

thought, represented by the *Qixin lun*, as its foundation, particularly influenced by the theories of the mind and consciousness from the Shelun and Dilun Schools.⁴⁴³

The establishment of Huayan teachings was not solely based on the theoretical aspect of relying on Tathāgatagarbha thought; another important dimension that constitutes the Huayan tradition is concerned with faith and altruistic practice methods. This aspect appears to have been significantly influenced by the *Huayan jing's* Ten Stages Chapter (*Shidi pin* 十地品) and the Entering the Dharma Realm Chapter (*Ru fajie pin* 入法界品), under the connection with the philosophical aspects of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. The vast structure of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, known in its Chinese translation as *Huayan jing*, is widely believed to have been edited into a single scripture from individually circulating chapters in Northwest India or Khotan (于闐).⁴⁴⁴ The Ten Stages Chapter, which served as the basis for the *Daśabhūmikā-vibhāṣā* (十地經論), was also circulated under the name *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (十住經) before it was compiled into the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and its Sanskrit version still exists.⁴⁴⁵ The Entering the Dharma Realm Chapter also circulated separately under the name of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* and was translated into Chinese by Prajñā (般若) during the Tang dynasty to form part of the 40-volume *Huayan jing*.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Pyongrae Lee, “화엄교학의 기초로서의 여래장설에 관한 연구 (Research on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory as the Foundation of Huayan Buddhism),” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 13 (1996): 24.

⁴⁴⁴ For a review of claims designating Khotan as the editing location of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, refer to the following: Gilam Seok, “화엄경의 편집은 호탄(Khotan)에서 이루어졌는가 [Was the Avataṃsaka Sutra Compiled in Khotan?],” *Korean Journal of Buddhist Studies* 42 (2015): 86-89.

⁴⁴⁵ Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 435-436.

⁴⁴⁶ According to Gyootag Shin, this version of the Entering the Dharma Realm Chapter is almost identical in content

The Ten Stages Chapter discusses the ten sequential stages of Bodhisattva practice, among which the sixth stage, the "Appearance Stage (現前地)," is notably focused on the manifestation of wisdom that observes the truth. According to this part of the Ten Stages Chapter, "When a Bodhisattva observes that the nature of all dharmas is pure, they enter the position of the sixth stage, Appearance Stage." And such observation leads one to "prioritize the Great Compassion (大悲)."⁴⁴⁷ The chapter continues, "Then, the Bodhisattva thinks as follows: 'The three realms (三界) are solely One Mind (一心), and the Buddha's twelvefold discrimination in teaching is all based on this One Mind.'"⁴⁴⁸ At the tenth stage, the "Dharma Cloud Stage (法雲地)," it is explained that a Bodhisattva emits boundless light from the innate virtuous roots (善根) 'liberated from the mundane realm (出世間, *lokottara*),' eliminating the suffering of all beings in all directions. Furthermore, it is added that a Bodhisattva in this stage, through their own vows, brings about the clouds of Great Compassion and performs the miraculous functions of the Three Insights (三明) and the Six Excellent Powers (六通).⁴⁴⁹

The Ten Stages Chapter does not elaborate in detail on the meaning of 'One Mind' it

to the Entering the Dharma Realm Chapter in the 80-fascicle version of the *Huayan jing*. However, one notable difference is that the version in the 40-fascicle *Huayan jing* additionally includes the "Conduct and Vows of Samantabhadra Chapter (普賢行願品)." See *Ibid.*, 436.

⁴⁴⁷ “菩薩如是觀一切法自性清淨，隨順無違，得入第六現前地，得明利隨順忍，未得無生法忍。「佛子！此菩薩摩訶薩如是觀已，復以大悲為首、大悲增上、大悲滿足，觀世間生滅。」 Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀), trans., the *Dafangguang fo Huayan jing* (大方廣佛華嚴經), T.10.0279.0193c14-18.

⁴⁴⁸ “佛子！此菩薩摩訶薩復作是念：『三界所有，唯是一心。如來於此分別演說十二有支，皆依一心，如是而立。』” *Ibid.*, T.10.0279.0194a13-15.

⁴⁴⁹ “「佛子！此菩薩坐彼大蓮華座時，於兩足下放百萬阿僧祇光明，普照十方諸大地獄，滅眾生苦；於兩膝輪放百萬阿僧祇光明，普照十方諸畜生趣，滅眾生苦。... 其光明網普於十方——如來眾會之前，雨眾妙香、華鬘、衣服、幢幡、寶蓋、諸摩尼等莊嚴之具以為供養，皆從出世善根所生，超過一切世間境界。... 佛子！此地菩薩以自願力，起大悲雲，震大法雷，通、明、無畏以為電光，福德、智慧而為密雲。” *Ibid.*, T.10.0279.0205b26-c207a26.

depicts. However, it does describe the manifestation of all phenomena based on dependent origination, and the wisdom that leads to enlightenment, the Vow and the Great Compassion to save sentient beings are all explained as the inconceivable functions of the 'innate virtuous roots' a Bodhisattva 'originally possesses.' This suggests that the Ten Stages Chapter places the source of enlightenment and altruistic practice beyond the empirical self, in the 'One Mind as the true nature of sentient beings.' This aspect would have been sufficient for the Huayan patriarchs of the time to explore the similarities between the *Huayan jing* and Tathāgatagarbha thought. Indeed, in his commentary on the *Huayan jing* (*Dafangguang fo huayan jing shu* 大方廣佛華嚴經疏), Chengguan states:

Due to not knowing that the Three Realms (三界) originate from one's own mind, one becomes trapped in the endless cycle of Saṃsāra, driven by ignorance and attachment. In this confusion, where the correct cause is misconstrued, various erroneous thoughts arise chaotically. How, then, can one come to understand that while the nature of dependent origination is emptiness, the true essence of suchness is, in fact, sublime and not empty (妙有)?⁴⁵⁰

In the citation above, Chengguan clarifies that the illusory perception of the Three Realms and the resultant cycle of birth and death originate from the minds of sentient beings. However, he simultaneously adds that the nature of such a mind is not empty but indeed possesses intrinsic virtues (妙有). This highlights both the contingent (隨緣) and immutable (不變) aspects of the mind of sentient beings, effectively aligning with the description of the Two Aspects within One Mind (一心二門) in the *Qixin lun*. That is, Chengguan incorporates the Tathāgatagarbha thought,

⁴⁵⁰ “以不知三界由乎我心。從癡有愛流轉無極。迷正因緣故異計紛然。安知因緣性空真如妙有。” Chengguan (澄觀), the *Dafangguang fo huayan jing shu* (大方廣佛華嚴經疏), T.35.1735.0521b13-15.

represented by the *Qixin lun*, as a theoretical framework for understanding the concept of One Mind in the *Huayan jin*.⁴⁵¹

The development of Huayan thought based on the Tathāgatagarbha concept as the internal foundation for enlightenment and altruistic practice is more definitively revealed in Chengguan's *Sansheng yuanrong guan men* (三聖圓融觀門). According to Chengguan's biography, the reason he wrote this treatise was as follows: Chengguan, unsatisfied with merely embodying the wisdom symbolized by Mañjuśrī (文殊) and longing for the compassion and practice symbolized by Samantabhadra (普賢), experienced a direct encounter with Samantabhadra Bodhisattva at Mount Emei (峨眉山) in Sichuan Province and attained sudden enlightenment through worship. It is on this experience that he based his later work, the *Sansheng yuanrong guan men*.⁴⁵²

According to Chengguan in this treatise, the "Three Holy Ones (三聖)" refer to Vairocana Buddha (毘盧遮那佛), Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (普賢菩薩), and Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva (文殊菩薩).⁴⁵³ Chengguan employs the Ground and Function (體用) relationship frequently utilized in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition to understand the practice and vow (行願) of Samantabhadra and the

⁴⁵¹ Regarding this point, Gyootag Shin notes that the philosophy of Dharmatā (法性) as defined by Fazang relies heavily on the *Huayan jing*'s Ten Stages Chapter and the Entering the Dharma Realm Chapter, as well as the *Qixin lun*, as sources for its metaphysics, epistemology, or ethics. See Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 406.

⁴⁵² Jongho Lee, *징관의 화엄 삼성원융관 연구* [A Study on the Cheng guan's view point of Huaecum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 26-27.

⁴⁵³ “三聖者：本師毘盧遮那如來，普賢、文殊二大菩薩是也。” Chengguan (澄觀), the *Sansheng yuanrong guan men* (三聖圓融觀門), T.45.1882.0671a10-11.

wisdom of Mañjuśrī. Specifically, Samantabhadra represents the *dharmadhātu* (法界) as the object of faith, i.e., the Ground of Suchness. Thus, according to him, the phrase "all sentient beings possess the Tathāgatagarbha" is equivalent to stating that the Ground of Samantabhadra is universal.⁴⁵⁴ This point shows that Chengguan interprets Samantabhadra's practice and vow for the salvation of sentient beings as the essence in understanding the notion of Tathāgatagarbha. The relationship between the Ground (體) of Samantabhadra's and the altruistic practice (行) described by Chengguan exhibits a kind of circular logic. That is, the altruistic practice is made possible due to the Ground of Samantabhadra, and the realization of altruistic practice based on this Ground, in turn, affirms its basis or the principle (理), i.e., the Ground of Samantabhadra. Chengguan claims, therefore, Samantabhadra's Ground, Practice, and Principle (三事) are intrinsically integrated (圓融).⁴⁵⁵

The faith in Samantabhadra can only be accomplished through the wisdom of Mañjuśrī. Chengguan describes that Mañjuśrī's wisdom is the power that enables sentient beings to have faith in Samantabhadra (能信). Hence, it is through wisdom that the principle of Samantabhadra is correctly revealed and leads to actual practice;⁴⁵⁶ by cultivating faith and aspiration for enlightenment through wisdom, progressing in diligence, one can recover the original Tathāgatagarbha, thereby naturally engaging in altruistic practices. Chengguan's explanation, which links wisdom, faith, and practice, closely mirrors the practical framework of the *Qixin lun*

⁴⁵⁴ “謂普賢表所信之法界。即在纏如來藏。故理趣般若云。一切衆生皆如來藏。普賢菩薩自體遍故。” Ibid., T.45.1882.0671a17-19.

⁴⁵⁵ “次普賢三事自相融者。理若無行。理終不顯。依體起行。行必稱體。由行證理。理無行外之理。由理顯行。無理外之行故。隨所證理。無不具一證一切證故。” Ibid., T.45.1882.0671b24-28.

⁴⁵⁶ “見後文殊。方見普賢。顯其有智方證理故。” Ibid., T.45.1882.0671b10-11.

on these concepts. According to Chengguan, Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī have a mutually integrated relationship because the function of Mañjuśrī's wisdom is based on Samantabhadra, the Ground of the Tathāgatagarbha. That is, Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī represent the relationship of Ground (體) and Function (用) within the Tathāgatagarbha.⁴⁵⁷ When the Ground and Function, or Principle (理) and Phenomena (事), are perfectly integrated, the altruistic practice Samantabhadra (普賢行) is actualized;⁴⁵⁸ and when the relationship between Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī is perfectly harmonious, it is the moment of final awakening when Vairocana's light illuminates everything, which is what Chengguan refers to as the 'perfect integration of the Three Holy Ones (三聖圓融).'⁴⁵⁹ Chengguan's 'Observations on the Perfect Integration of the Three Holy Ones (三聖圓融觀)' elucidates a contemplative practice grounded in the theoretical framework of the integration of Vairocana Buddha, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, and Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva within the Huayan tradition. In summary, the Chinese Huayan tradition, as manifested through Chengguan's thought, adopts the unique Tathāgatagarbha framework of the *Qixin lun*, developing it into a theoretical system for the Huayan practices of contemplation and altruism.

⁴⁵⁷ “又卽體之用曰智。卽用之體曰理。卽體用無二。是以文殊三事融通隱隱。卽是普賢三事涉入重重。此二不異。名普賢帝網之行。” Ibid., T.45.1882.0671c09-12.

⁴⁵⁸ Chengguan explicitly states that the practice is referred to as the "Practice of Samantabhadra (普賢行)" rather than the "Practice of Mañjuśrī (文殊行)" because Mañjuśrī's wisdom ultimately *belongs to* Tathāgatagarbha. This implies that within the relationship between wisdom and altruistic practice, he considers the latter to be of a more fundamental position. See “故普賢行品反上下諸經廣顯理事圓融。爲普賢行。非獨事行。名普賢行。旣二聖相融而不名文殊行者。攝智屬理。唯一心法界故。舉一全收。” Ibid., T.45.1882.0671c12-15.

⁴⁵⁹ “二聖法門旣相融者。則普賢因滿。離相絕言。沒因果海。是名毘盧遮那。光明遍照唯證相應故。” Ibid., T.45.1882.0671c15-17.

3.4.4 Considerations on the Philosophical Challenges Associated with Tathāgatagarbha Thought

The systematization of Tathāgatagarbha thought, initially through the *Qixin lun* and its subsequent elaboration within the Huayan tradition, has undoubtedly opened new horizons for the ethical reinterpretation of traditional Tathāgatagarbha concepts. Despite its profound philosophical contributions, Tathāgatagarbha thought introduces several complex challenges. Since the twentieth century, these issues have ignited fervent debates among Buddhist scholars, debates that persist today, reflecting the depth and dynamism of Buddhist philosophical inquiry. This section briefly addresses some key philosophical challenges surrounding Tathāgatagarbha thought. These include: 1) The problem of the adaptability of Suchness to conditions (隨緣). 2) The ontological relationship between Suchness and fundamental ignorance (根本無明), and the argument for the futility of practice. 3) Criticisms regarding its similarities to Brahmanic thought and the Critical Buddhism (批判佛教) movement. 4) The expedient means argument of Tathāgatagarbha. There is no doubt that each of these philosophical challenges associated with Tathāgatagarbha thought requires in-depth analysis and contemplation. Moreover, since these challenges are closely related to the ethical interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha thought, their significance cannot be overlooked. However, as participating in the debates surrounding these topics is not the primary focus of this study, this section aims to conclude this chapter with a brief introduction and analysis of these issues.

3.4.4.1 The Problem of the Adaptability of Suchness to Conditions (隨緣)

The issue of Suchness's adaptability to conditions, related to the "Two Aspects within One Mind (一心二門)" theory that characterizes the notion of Suchness in the *Qixin lun*, sparked a notable debate in the early twentieth century between monks associated with the Wuchang Institute for Buddhist Studies (武昌佛學院) and scholars at the China Institute for Buddhist Studies (支那內學院). This debate commenced in 1922 when Ouyang Jingwu (歐陽竟無), leading the China Institute for Buddhist Studies, authored *Weishi jueze lun* (唯識抉擇論), critiquing the *Qixin lun*'s interpretations of consciousness and mind. Soon after, Taixu (太虛), the founder of the Wuchang Institute for Buddhist Studies, responded with a rebuttal.⁴⁶⁰ The discourse between these two factions, along with their disciples, extended for nearly three decades, exemplifying the intense and enduring scholarly engagement with the philosophical intricacies of Tathāgatagarbha thought within the modern Buddhist academic landscape.⁴⁶¹

To comprehend the debate surrounding the Tathāgatagarbha concept of *Qixin lun* in the early twentieth century China, it is crucial first to consider the socio-political context of the era. This period was marked by a cultural and power clash between Western nations and China, following the Opium War. The encroachment of Western imperialism into various aspects of Chinese society posed a significant challenge, with the recovery of authority becoming a primary

⁴⁶⁰ Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 3.

⁴⁶¹ Certain analyses propose that the conflict between these two factions was fundamentally influenced by the tensions between lay practitioners and monastics within modern Chinese society. Refer to Youngsook Jeon, "중국불교는 어떻게 단련되었는가 (How was Chinese Buddhism Consolidated)," *The Buddhist Review* (佛敎評論) 69 (2017).

concern for Chinese intellectuals.⁴⁶² Additionally, within China, there was growing skepticism towards the influence of religion and superstitious practices, perceived as remnants of a pre-modern era, on national development.⁴⁶³ Thus, Chinese Buddhologists grappled with engaging Western philosophies, thoughts, and sciences from their own traditional perspectives.⁴⁶⁴

Yang Wenhui (楊文會, 1837–1911), often regarded as the "father of modern Chinese Buddhism," was instrumental in positioning the *Qixin lun* and Yogācāra thought as formidable counterparts to Western philosophies.⁴⁶⁵ Despite recognizing that the *Qixin lun* might have been an apocryphal work compiled in China, he saw the teachings of this treatise as a comprehensive encapsulation of all Buddhist traditions. To this end, Yang Wenhui published many scriptures related to this treatise, including its first English translation, through the Jinling Institute for Engraving Sutras (金陵刻經處), which he founded in 1866.⁴⁶⁶ Another pivotal text Yang Wenhui obtained and published was Kuiji's commentary on *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論), the *Cheng weishi lun shuji* (成唯識論述記). He encouraged students at his own Buddhist educational institute,

⁴⁶² Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, "중국 근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism]," *불교학보* (佛教學報) 57 (2011): 209.

⁴⁶³ For more details on the socio-political context surrounding religion in early 20th century China, see Erik J. Hammerstrom, "Yogācāra and Science in the 1920s: The Wuchang School's Approach to Modern Mind Science," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford University Press, 2014), 172-174.

⁴⁶⁴ According to Erik J. Hammerstrom, in the early 20th century, Chinese Buddhologists seriously considered Yogācāra thought as a bridge connecting China's traditional philosophy with modern science. They engaged with contemporary scientific subjects such as neurophysiology, modern psychology, and scientific methodology, integrating these topics with Yogācāra thought. For a concise account of these examples, see *Ibid.*, 170-179; Jeran Kim, "중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China]," *불교학보* (佛教學報) 45 (2006): 111-112.

⁴⁶⁵ For a brief account of Yang Wenhui's contributions to the study of modern Chinese Buddhism, see the following reference: Francesca Tarocco, "Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings," *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 330-332.

⁴⁶⁶ Jinmoo Kim, "양문회의 불교사상과 금릉각경처 [Yang WenHui's Buddhism thought and Jinlingkejingchu]," *불교학보* (佛教學報) 45 (2006): 5-8.

Zhiyuan jingshe (祇洹精舍), to study these texts. Several of his students, including Ouyang Jingwu, Taixu, Lü Cheng (呂澂), Xiong Shili (熊十力), and Liang Qichao (梁啟超), later emerged as influential figures, marking Yang Wenhui's efforts as a critical starting point for the resurgence of Yogācāra studies in modern China.⁴⁶⁷ For these scholars, the depth of Yogācāra's consciousness theory was not only seen as a means to counter Western epistemological traditions but also as a valuable intellectual asset capable of leading the modernization of the Chinese scholarly community.⁴⁶⁸

Yang Wenhui's engagement with the *Qixin lun* and his efforts to address Western philosophies led to a division among his followers into two main groups: those associated with the China Institute for Buddhist Studies and Buddhist monks from the Wuchang Institute for Buddhist Studies.⁴⁶⁹ The former group included scholars such as Ouyang Jingwu, Wang Enyang (王恩陽), and Lü Cheng (呂澂), who viewed the Weishi (唯識) tradition as an Indian Buddhist counterpart to Western Idealism.⁴⁷⁰ These scholars maintained a critical stance towards the teachings of the *Qixin lun*, considering it through a lens of intellectual engagement with analytical trends. In contrast, the latter group, represented by figures such as Taixu and Yinshun

⁴⁶⁷ Jeran Kim, “중국의 근대화와 불교 [The Modernization of China and Chinese Buddhism],” *The Buddhist Review* (佛敎評論) 22 (2005).

⁴⁶⁸ Dan Lusthaus, “Lü Cheng, Epistemology, and Genuine Buddhism,” in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 317.

⁴⁶⁹ For details on the founding of the Wuchang Institute for Buddhist Studies and the subsequent activities of Yang Wenhui, see Erik J. Hammerstrom, “Yogācāra and Science in the 1920s: The Wuchang School’s Approach to Modern Mind Science,” in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford University Press, 2014), 179-183.

⁴⁷⁰ The revival of Weishi studies, spearheaded by these individuals, exerted a significant impact on the Buddhist scholarly community in China, to the extent that it could be described as the “Indianization of China,” in the words of Hu Shih (胡適). Among the key figures in this movement was Ouyang Jingwu, who played a central role in the resurgence of interest in Weishi Buddhism within the modern Chinese context. See Eyal Aviv, “Ouyang Jingwu: From Yogācāra Scholasticism to Soteriology,” in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 285-286.

(印順), believed in strengthening Chinese Buddhist traditions as a means to reform society. They defended the notion of Suchness as outlined in the *Qixin lun*, viewing it as essential to their efforts to modernize and reform Chinese Buddhism in opposition to the anti-religious atmosphere fueled by Marxism during that era. Despite a consensus on Buddhism's potential to counteract Western modernity and enhance Chinese science and culture, their paths diverged on the interpretation of the *Qixin lun*, particularly regarding philosophical interpretations and the question of authenticity.⁴⁷¹

The initial debate between Ouyang Jingwu, who took over the Jinling Institute from Yang Wenhui and founded the China Institute in 1922, and Taixu, who established the Wuchang Institute in the same year, revolved around a variety of issues.⁴⁷² A focal point of contention was the philosophical characteristics of the notion of Suchness as presented in the *Qixin lun*. Regarding this point, Ouyang Jingwu contended that it should be the Attributes (相) and Function (用) of Suchness that are to be conditioned or permeated, not the Ground (體) of Suchness itself. This stance marks a clear departure from the descriptions found in the *Qixin lun*, which often binds the Ground and Attributes together for contrast against Function. Ouyang Jingwu's argument is grounded in the Yogācāra or Weishi tradition, and he notably regarded the *Yujiashi di lun* (瑜伽師地論, *Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra*), attributed to Maitreya and translated by Xuanzang, as a

⁴⁷¹ Scott Pacey, "Taixu, Yogācāra, and the Buddhist Approach to Modernity," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 150-151.

⁴⁷² Jeran Kim, "중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006): 118; also see Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 3.

key text.⁴⁷³ He viewed that only the eight types of consciousness (識, *vijñāna*) undergo the process of permeation (熏習), while Suchness remains a distinct ground, separate from the realms of Attributes and Function that are mediated by such permeation. From his Weishi perspectives on ālaya-vijñāna and Suchness, he insisted that Suchness must be immutable and separated from conditioned phenomena.⁴⁷⁴ According to Ouyang Jingwu's perspectives, while the *Qixin lun*'s articulation of Suchness's immutability is correct to a limited extent, its discussion of Suchness's permeation by ignorance incorrectly conflates the Ground and Function of Suchness, leading to misinterpretation.⁴⁷⁵ Similarly, the *Qixin lun*'s method of explicating the idea of Three Categories of Greatness by combining Ground and Attributes also results in an improper mixing of concepts due to their distinct epistemological standings. In this regard, the notion of Suchness in the *Qixin lun*, which posits the permeation of Suchness by ignorance, serves only to confound people.⁴⁷⁶ Ouyang Jingwu did not dispute the authorship of the *Qixin lun* by Āśvagoṣa but viewed the treatise's depiction of the relationship between Suchness's Ground and Function as being influenced by the analytical discussions in Theravada Buddhism, specifically, the *Discussion of*

⁴⁷³ Eyal Aviv, "Ouyang Jingwu: From Yogācāra Scholasticism to Soteriology," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 294-299; Dan Lusthaus, "Lü Cheng, Epistemology, and Genuine Buddhism," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 319-320.

⁴⁷⁴ Wing-tsit Chan, *Religious Trends in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 114-115.

⁴⁷⁵ For a detailed discussion on Ouyang Jingwu's criticism of the concept of Suchness in the *Qixin lun*, refer to the following: Huanzhen Feng (馮煥珍), "Dasheng qixin lun fei fojiao ma 《大乘起信論》「非佛教」嗎—關於「《起信論》非佛教」說的教理學反省 (Is the *Qixin lun* not Buddhist?: A Theological Reflection on the Claim that the '*Qixin lun* is Not Buddhist')," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* (中華佛學研) 09 (2005): 33-38.

⁴⁷⁶ Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 8~10.

Analysis (分別論, *Vibhāṅga*).⁴⁷⁷ This perspective of Ouyang Jingwu on the *Qixin lun*, unlike the Critical Buddhism movement which was antagonistic towards both the *Qixin lun* and the notion of Buddha-nature, did not wholly reject the Tathāgatagarbha teachings of the *Qixin lun*.⁴⁷⁸

Advocating for the Mahāyānist ethos of harmonization, Taixu challenges Ouyang Jingwu's assertions, affirming the foundational significance of the *Qixin lun* in Buddhist tradition. He acknowledges the attribution of the *Qixin lun* to Aśvaghōṣa and contends that, being compiled prior to the emergence of the Mādhyamika tradition, this treatise possesses an authenticity surpassing that of Weishi teachings.⁴⁷⁹ Moreover, Taixu points out a clear distinction between the concept of Suchness as it appears in the *Qixin lun* and the Weishi interpretation of Suchness. Ouyang Jingwu's perspective on Suchness was grounded in Xuanzang's Weishi interpretations, asserting that all phenomena's arising and ceasing rest solely on the eighth consciousness, and hence Suchness itself remains ontologically detached from phenomena; this view suggests that the substratum of the phenomenal world is exclusively ālaya-vijñāna. Taixu critiqued this understanding for its narrow interpretation of ālaya-vijñāna as merely the “consciousness of self-attachment (我愛執藏).”⁴⁸⁰ He believed this interpretation skewed excessively towards an ontological aspect of Suchness, overlooking its practical implications.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 10~11.

⁴⁷⁸ Eyal Aviv, "Ouyang Jingwu: From Yogācāra Scholasticism to Soteriology," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 303-305.

⁴⁷⁹ Scott Pacey, "Taixu, Yogācāra, and the Buddhist Approach to Modernity," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 153; Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 12.

⁴⁸⁰ Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 13.

Taixu argued that Suchness is not merely an abstract truth but also encompasses practical aspects of the path to recovery it through practice. Thus, this notion should be understood as embodying a practical concept that includes right wisdom (正智) to eliminate ignorance.⁴⁸¹ To bridge this understanding, he proposed ādāna-vijñāna (阿陀那識), entailing the purity of amala-vijñāna, as an alternative way to comprehend the notions of eighth consciousness and Suchness.⁴⁸² He posited that ādāna-vijñāna signifies both truth and ignorance, paralleling the concept of Suchness in the *Qixin lun*. He termed this approach as “Faxing Weishi (法性唯識)” as opposed to the more phenomenologically focused “Faxiang Weishi (法相唯識),” considering ādāna-vijñāna as central to all Yogācāra teachings.⁴⁸³ In his treatise *Faxiang weishixue gailun* (法相唯識學概論), Taixu adopts the term *faxiang* (法相), a derogatory name coined within the Huayan tradition, to argue that “Faxiang” and “Weishi” essentially share the same content.⁴⁸⁴ This stance reveals his perspective on the interpretation of ālaya-vijñāna, demonstrating how he bridges the concepts

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 15~16.

⁴⁸² The concept of ādāna-vijñāna is interpreted differently by the Weishi tradition, which traces its lineage back to Xuanzang, and the Shelun tradition, which follows Paramārtha. Within the Weishi tradition, ādāna-vijñāna is regarded as synonymous with ālaya-vijñāna, emphasizing its pure aspect as amala-vijñāna. In contrast, the Shelun tradition views ādāna-vijñāna as equivalent to manas-vijñāna, highlighting its role in fostering the delusion of the self. Moreover, while the Weishi tradition identifies amala-vijñāna with the untainted facet of ālaya-vijñāna, the Shelun tradition posits amala-vijñāna as a distinct, ninth realm within the spectrum of vijñānas. The Cheng weishi lun defines ādāna-vijñāna as follows: “<阿陀那識甚深細，一切種子如瀑流，我於凡愚不開演，恐彼分別執為我。> 以能執持諸法種子，及能執受色根依處，亦能執取結生相續，故說此識名阿陀那。無性有情不能窮底，故說甚深。趣寂種性不能通達，故名甚細。是一切法真實種子，緣擊便生轉識波浪，恒無間斷猶如瀑流。凡即無性，愚即趣寂，恐彼於此起分別執，墮諸惡趣障生聖道，故我世尊不為開演。唯第八識有如是相。” Vasubandhu (世親), trans. by Xuanzang (玄奘), *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論), T.31.1585.0014c05-14.

⁴⁸³ Jeran Kim, "태허와 구양경무의 논쟁을 통해본 중국 불교의 성격 [The Character of Chinese Buddhism through the discussion on Tai-hai and Ouyang-Chingwu]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛敎學) 30 (2001): 13.

⁴⁸⁴ Scott Pacey, "Taixu, Yogācāra, and the Buddhist Approach to Modernity," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 152-153.

within the framework of the *Qixin lun*. Tarocco points out that Taixu's stance likely stemmed from an analogy used in the *Qixin lun* that he frequently cited in his writings, comparing the relationship between ignorance and the mind to that of wind and water. According to this metaphor, just as water stirs into waves by the wind but returns to calmness once the wind ceases, the mind, though tainted by ignorance and manifesting phenomena, regains its inherent tranquility when the influence of ignorance (無明風) ends. This suggests that despite the transient combination of ignorance and mind in manifesting phenomena, the essence of the mind remains unaltered.⁴⁸⁵

It would be difficult to deny that Taixu's arguments surrounding the notions of Suchness and consciousness in the *Qixin lun* substantially reflect the distinctive perspectives on them articulated within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions. Despite his contributions to the promotion of Yogācāra in China during the twentieth century, Taixu did not actively utilize the teachings of the new Yogācāra (新唯識) for the purpose of revitalizing Chinese Buddhist tradition, as pointed out by Guangliang Li.⁴⁸⁶ Summarizing their debate, both Ouyang Jingwu and Taixu agreed on the realization of phenomena's arising and ceasing and the achievement of enlightenment based on the sentient beings' mind. However, they diverged in their understanding of the relationship between Suchness as the truth itself and its manifestation in the phenomenal world, particularly concerning notions of permeation (熏習) and Function (用). This disagreement also mirrors the different approaches to incorporating the concept of Suchness within Yogācāra

⁴⁸⁵ Francesca Tarocco, "Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith (Dasheng qixin lun)* and its modern readings," *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 331-333.

⁴⁸⁶ Guangliang Li (李廣良), *Xinshi de liliang: Taixu weishixue sixiang yanjiu* (心識的力量: 太虛唯識學思想研究) (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2003), 48, quoted in Scott Pacey, "Taixu, Yogācāra, and the Buddhist Approach to Modernity," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 149-150.

and Tathāgatagarbha philosophies.⁴⁸⁷

The debate initiated by Ouyang Jingwu and Taixu on the concept of Suchness in the *Qixin lun* continued to resonate and was further explored by subsequent generations within the China Institute and the Wuchang Institute into the 1950s. Wang Enyang and Lü Cheng, disciples of Ouyang Jingwu, upheld his view that a clear distinction must be made between the Ground and Function of Suchness, challenging the dualistic structure of the mind in the *Qixin lun* that suggests the pure Suchness can give rise to defiled phenomena.⁴⁸⁸ This critique, deeply rooted in Yogācāra interpretations, posited that defilement could only cause further defilement and that the idea of purity leading to defilement contradicts fundamental Buddhist teachings on causality.⁴⁸⁹ In response, Chen Weidong (陳維東) and Tang Dayuan (唐大圓), who defended Taixu's interpretation, contended that embracing a holistic understanding of Suchness—encompassing both its Ground and its manifestation—faithfully represents the profound and non-dualistic essence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁴⁹⁰

Furthermore, subsequent scholars have raised additional concerns regarding the

⁴⁸⁷ Ouyang Jingwu's critique of Tathāgatagarbha thought in the *Qixin lun* seems to be related to his overall stance towards Buddhism itself. He held a critical view of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, advocating that, apart from the Madhyamaka (空宗) and Yogācāra (唯識宗) schools, one should not engage with other philosophical schools. This stance underscores his selective adherence to certain Buddhist philosophical frameworks. Refer to Jeran Kim, “중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006): 118-120.

⁴⁸⁸ In his youth, Lü Cheng first encountered Ouyang Jingwu while attending Yang Wenhui's lectures, which profoundly influenced his thinking. In 1914, Ouyang Jingwu founded the Buddhist Research Institute (佛敎研究部) under the Jinling Institute for Engraving Sutras (金陵刻經處), and Lü Cheng was among its early members. See Dan Lusthaus, “Lü Cheng, Epistemology, and Genuine Buddhism,” in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 319.

⁴⁸⁹ Jeran Kim, “중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006): 122-126.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

authenticity of the *Qixin lun*. Unlike Ouyang Jingwu, who harbored no doubts about Aśvagoṣa's authorship of the treatise, Lü Cheng—his successor at the China Institute—posited that the treatise had its doctrinal roots in the *Lengjia Jing* (楞伽經, *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*) and was originally authored by the Chan school.⁴⁹¹ Equipped with knowledge of Sanskrit and Tibetan, Lü Cheng accessed Buddhist texts in various languages beyond Chinese, reinforcing his belief in his ability to discern 'Genuine Buddhism (眞實佛教).'⁴⁹² From this standpoint, he adopted a critical stance towards apocryphal Buddhist texts composed in China. Among these, the translations of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* by Bodhiruci during the Wei (魏) dynasty and the *Qixin lun* were subject to his rigorous critique. Through textual comparisons with the Sanskrit original and other translations of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Lü Cheng concluded that Bodhiruci's translation deviated significantly or was at times grossly mistranslated from its Sanskrit original. He argued that the *Qixin lun* by Paramārtha must also be an apocryphal work of Chinese origin, given the significant overlap of terms between it and Bodhiruci's version of the *Lengjia Jing*. Furthermore, Lü Cheng contended that the central pillar of the Chinese Buddhist tradition, Tathāgatagarbha thought, had been “contaminated” by such apocryphal works. His extreme assessment reflects

⁴⁹¹ Chen-kuo Lin, “Metaphysics, Suffering, and Liberation: The Debate between Two Buddhisms,” in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 305-307; also see, Jeran Kim, “중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China],” *불교학보* (佛教學報) 45 (2006): 125; Indeed, similar views had been previously articulated by Liang Qichao and Wang Enyang. However, their perspectives sparked less controversy. Liang Qichao recognized the significant value of the *Qixin lun* within the history of Buddhism, while Wang Enyang ascribed the origins of this treatise to the Sāṃkhya School rather than attributing it to Chinese tradition. See *Ibid.*, 122-123; also see, Francesca Tarocco, “Lost in translation? The *Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun*) and its modern readings,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no.2 (2008): 332-333.

⁴⁹² Dan Lusthaus, “Lü Cheng, Epistemology, and Genuine Buddhism,” in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 318-321; This analytical approach to literature was not unique to Lü Cheng. According to Dan Lusthaus, 20th-century Buddhist scholars, influenced by the philological methodologies from the Qing dynasty and Western traditions, began to adopt comparative analytical methods towards existing Buddhist texts. This led to the revival of research on Sanskrit Buddhist literature, which had been interrupted since the Song dynasty. Such research trends influenced these scholars to adopt a critical perspective towards Chinese apocryphal Buddhist texts, like the *Qixin lun*.

his fundamental stance in pursuit of 'Genuine Buddhism.'⁴⁹³ Yin Shun (印順), a scholar from the Wuchang Institute for Buddhist Studies, while not directly opposing Lü Cheng's critiques, posited that questions of authenticity should not overshadow the *Qixin lun*'s significant historical and doctrinal contributions.⁴⁹⁴ He advocated for a meticulous re-evaluation of traditional Chinese Buddhist doctrines, emphasizing the need to scrutinize their soteriological objectives. In this context, the *Qixin lun* emerges as a pivotal text, demanding thorough examination by contemporary Buddhologists.⁴⁹⁵

In the *Qixin lun*, although it explains that phenomena arise and cease due to the contamination of the mind by ignorance, this treatise does not assert that the manifestation of phenomena is based on the intrinsic purity of Suchness. Accordingly, the treatise posits the concept of One Mind (一心) or *alaya-vijñāna* (阿梨耶識), which encompasses both the aspects of truth and arising and ceasing, distinct from the notion of Suchness (眞如). Thus, the critique that phenomena arising from purity result in contamination does not seem to accurately capture the theory of mind in the *Qixin lun*. However, the criticism, fundamentally based on a *Yogācāra* viewpoint that does not adopt the idea of Dependent Origination based on *Tathāgatagarbha* (如來藏緣起), may hold validity from that perspective. Moreover, the concept of *alaya-vijñāna* (阿梨耶識) as understood by the critics, while sharing the name, is in fact not identical to that described in the *Qixin lun* (阿梨耶識), leading to a debate that could not culminate in a reconcilable

⁴⁹³ Dan Lusthaus, "Lü Cheng, Epistemology, and Genuine Buddhism," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 338-342.

⁴⁹⁴ Jeran Kim, "중국근대 신불교 운동과 『대승기신론』 논쟁 [The Controversies of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* from the Perspective of the Movement of New Buddhism in Modern China]," *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006): 124.

⁴⁹⁵ Scott Hurley, "The doctrinal transformation of twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism: Master Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine," *Contemporary Buddhism* 5, no. 1 (2004): 29-30.

conclusion.

Regarding the issue of Suchness's adaptability to conditions (隨緣), one alternative to bridge the gap between these two opposing perspectives is Wonhyo's interpretation of the permeation by defilements (染法熏習). Wonhyo references the *She dasheng lun* (攝大乘論), which states that 'constant dharma' (常法) is not susceptible to permeation, and offers an explanation on behalf of the *Qixin lun*'s description of Suchness's permeation by defilements. According to him, when sentient beings discuss the true nature of Suchness, "they are viewing it from the perspective of birth and death (生滅門)" since their mind was already contaminated by ignorance and defilements. Thus, the existence of sentient beings with contaminated minds justifies the statement that 'defilements permeate Suchness.' In this context, Wonhyo emphasizes that the Suchness being referred to when saying it is contaminated does not point to the 'pure concept of Suchness (真如門).' What is actually being contaminated encompasses the broader meaning of sentient beings' minds in union with delusion (真妄和合), including the empirical self within the phenomena. This interpretation does not contradict the claim that the meaning of birth and death (生義) cannot be bestowed on the concept of true purity of Suchness.⁴⁹⁶ The concept of Suchness's adaptation to conditions serves to express how sentient beings' minds, already tainted by fundamental ignorance, undergo further contamination. Wonhyo's interpretation provides a valid explanation of the meaning of Suchness's adaptation to conditions, implicitly affirming that

⁴⁹⁶ “第三之中。先喻。後合。合中言真如淨法者。是本覺義。無明染法者。是不覺義。良由一識含此二義。更互相熏。遍生染淨。此意正釋經本所說不思議熏不思議變義也。問。攝大乘說。要具四義。方得受熏。故言常法不能受熏。何故此中說熏真如。解云。熏習之義有其二種。彼論且約可思議熏。故說常法不受熏也。此論明其不可思議熏。故說無明熏真如。真如熏無明。顯意不同。故不相違。然此文中生滅門內性淨本覺說名真如。故有熏義。非謂真如門中真如。以其真如門中不說能生義。” Wonhyo (元曉), the *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0217a28-b10.

Suchness itself is never contaminated. This interpretation appears faithful to the *Qixin lun*'s descriptions of the relationship between Suchness and birth and death in phenomena. According to this treatise, the assertion that the worldly cycle of birth and death is based on the tathāgatagarbha does not imply that the tathāgatagarbha contains the impure dharmas responsible for this cycle. Such an interpretation misunderstands the treatise's original explanation. While it is true that Suchness or Tathāgatagarbha is characterized by pure Attributes, the impure dharmas rest upon Suchness without forming a direct, 'mutually corresponding relationship (相應)' with it.⁴⁹⁷ This means that, although impure dharmas arise in a realm supported by Suchness, they do not compromise the inherent purity of Suchness itself. Thus, the Suchness, while generating the birth and death in phenomena, remains always in a state of purity.

As previously discussed, the early twentieth-century debates in China, led by Ouyang Jingwu, Tai Xu, and their followers, focused primarily on Suchness's adaptability to conditions (隨緣) and the authorship of the *Qixin lun*. It is noteworthy that these discussions also reveal the complexity of the concept of the self in Buddhist thought. Specifically, by rejecting Suchness's adaptability, one limits the self to its empirical form, emphasizing its contingent nature and thereby distancing it from Suchness. This view aligns with the Prajñāpāramitā and Yogācāra perspectives, which both refute the concept of a permanent self. Accordingly, this stance does not assume the notion of a True Self. Conversely, recognizing the adaptability of Suchness broadens the concept of the self by linking the empirical self with the pure aspect of Suchness, namely True Self, akin to the structure of Two Aspects within One Mind in the *Qixin lun*. This approach,

⁴⁹⁷ “四者、聞修多羅說一切世間生死染法皆依如來藏而有，一切諸法不離真如。以不解故，謂如來藏自體具有一切世間生死等法。云何對治？以如來藏從本已來唯有過恒沙等諸淨功德，不離、不斷、不異真如義故。以過恒沙等煩惱染法，唯是妄有，性自本無，從無始世來未曾與如來藏相應故。若如來藏體有妄法，而使證會永息妄者，則無是處故。”
Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0580a17-26.

as supported by scriptures and treatises on Tathāgatagarbha thought, suggests a presupposed duality within the concept of the self.⁴⁹⁸

The issue of Suchness's immutability and adaptability to conditions is also crucially related to Buddhist ethics, particularly concerning the notion of inherent permeation by Suchness (自體相熏習). The ethical characteristic of the Tathāgatagarbha thought in the *Qixin lun* is best represented by this notion. Traditionally in Buddhism, a critical condition presented for overcoming ignorance is the opportunity to hear and learn the Buddha's teachings, that is, external conditions (外緣). In the *Qixin lun*, such external conditions are not merely acquired by chance but are also a result of the functions of Suchness itself, or external permeation (外熏). Furthermore, the Tathāgatagarbha thought introduces an additional, absolute condition: the inner, essential force that allows practitioners to shed delusion and progress towards enlightenment, an internal cause (內因).⁴⁹⁹ Based on the *a priori* attributes of Suchness, sentient beings inherently shun defilements and arise the mind towards enlightenment (內熏), and ultimately achieve the wisdom to correctly understand dharmas (淨緣起). The notion of inherent permeation by

⁴⁹⁸ Not all proponents of the *Qixin lun* seemed to agree with the Tathāgatagarbha thought's notion of True Self. For instance, Yinshun, a prominent figure in the debate on the *Qixin lun* in China, argued that interpretations of Tathāgatagarbha thought, including those informed by the Huayan tradition, could lead sentient beings to cling to the self. He believed such interpretations were incompatible with Buddhism's fundamental doctrines of non-self and dependent origination. Consequently, Yinshun emphasized the practice of emptiness (空) as the sole guideline for cultivation. See, Scott Hurley, "The doctrinal transformation of twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism: Master Yinshun's interpretation of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine," *Contemporary Buddhism* 5, no. 1 (2004): 29~30.

⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, critical engagement with the notion of the intrinsic function of Suchness has a profound historical depth. For instance, Huizhao (慧沼, 650-714), a scholar who pursued Yogācāra studies under the mentorship of Kuiji, explicitly refutes this notion in his treatise, the *Nengxian zhongbian huiji lun* (能顯中邊慧日論): "起信論中。體大即真如體。相大即是無量性功德相。用即能生世出世善因果者。用大。有為行是如用故。能生一切者。此亦不爾。真如豈有作用。若有作用。同諸行故。" Huizhao (慧沼), the *Nengxian zhongbian huiji lun* (能顯中邊慧日論), T.45.1863.0426b21-24.

Suchness provides not only the essential internal motivation and external conditions for the moral practices of sentient beings but also establishes a unique theoretical foundation within Tathāgatagarbha thought for the criteria of moral judgment. This notion becomes legitimate only when it embraces the dichotomous concepts of the self in the *Qixin lun*, which presupposes the integration of truth and delusion (眞妄和合).

3.4.4.2 The Ontological Relationship between Suchness and Fundamental Ignorance and the Argument for Futility of Practice

It is essential to note that in the debates among early twentieth-century Buddhist scholars, the complex notion of Fundamental Ignorance (根本無明) plays a pivotal role. From the perspective of karma and saṃsāra, ignorance is understood as the state in which an individual already bears the consequences of their past life's karma at the onset of their next life. The birth of sentient beings in this life is seen as the result of unresolved karma from previous existences, with conditions acquired at birth adversely affecting their future thoughts and actions. This results in all sentient beings being born in a state already tainted by the karma of past lives. Hence, ignorance is referred to as 'Fundamental Ignorance' or 'Beginningless Ignorance (無始無明).'⁵⁰⁰ This conceptualization of ignorance is coherent within the Buddhist framework, implying

⁵⁰⁰ In the *Qixin lun*, the concept of ignorance is referred to as "Beginningless Ignorance (無始無明)," while "Fundamental Ignorance (根本無明)" is the term used by Fazang to indicate this concept. Both expressions signify that sentient beings are influenced by the karmic obstruction of ignorance from the moment of their birth. See, “初中言無明熏習所起識者。牒上所說依根本無明起彼靜心成業等識也。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信

that entry into the cycle of *samsāra*, in some sense, denotes a failure to attain the liberation of *Nirvāṇa* in a previous life. Therefore, from birth, ignorance is an inherent aspect, making it one of the most naturally perceivable states from an existential standpoint for practitioners. Consequently, the realization of being enveloped in ignorance represents one of the greatest challenges in overcoming it. Rupert Gethin, in this context, metaphorically characterizes fundamental ignorance as a *labyrinth*, highlighting the complexity and difficulty in navigating and overcoming it:

On the one hand, we are born with a certain mental and physical make-up, and are presented with various experiences over which we have no control; on the other hand, we continually choose certain courses of action in response to what is given us. We like or do not like our experiences, ourselves, and our bodies, and we decide to act in certain ways in order to try to change our lives. But from the Buddhist perspective, because of the fundamental condition of ignorance, we fail to act effectively and lose our way in the labyrinth of conditions that constitutes our being. That dependent arising is indeed presented by the Buddhist tradition as something profound and, in a sense, difficult and complicated is aptly summed by a saying attributed to the Buddha himself.⁵⁰¹

Understanding Tathāgatagarbha thought still leaves us puzzled over the ontological relationship between Suchness and Fundamental Ignorance. Fundamental Ignorance refers to a state of lacking correct perception of dharmas, pointing to the root of all suffering within existence.⁵⁰² As explained in the *Qixin lun*, even if delusions (妄想) and the realm of delusion (妄境界), among other afflictions, are acknowledged to arise based on ignorance as their direct cause

論義記), T.44.1846.0266c09-11.

⁵⁰¹ Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 154.

⁵⁰² “當知無明能生一切染法，以一切染法皆是不覺相故。... 是故三界虛偽唯心所作，離心則無六塵境界。此義云何？以一切法皆從心起妄念而生，一切分別即分別自心，心不見心無相可得。當知世間一切境界，皆依眾生無明妄心而得住持。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0577a20-b21.

(因), the question of where the state of ignorance is grounded remains unanswered and becomes a subject of debate. The centrality of the *Qixin lun* to this problem lies in its explanation of Fundamental Ignorance, suggesting that ignorance suddenly (忽然) appears and only the Buddha fully understands why it has existed since time immemorial, thus evading a clear answer.⁵⁰³ Elsewhere, discussing the nature of unawareness (不覺義), ignorance is described as "the manifestation of Suchness's nature as phenomena," along with the pure dharmas (無漏) of Suchness.⁵⁰⁴ This explanation aligns with other sections of the *Qixin lun* that imply, in the mind of sentient beings (阿梨耶識, ālaya-vijñāna), the aspect of Suchness 'encompass (攝)' all dharmas while the aspect of birth and death 'manifest (生)' them; these neither identical nor different aspects of the mind suggest that each represents 'the nature of enlightenment (覺義)' and 'the nature of unawareness (不覺義),' respectively.⁵⁰⁵ This suggests that the state of Fundamental Ignorance, or the state of non-enlightenment, may not be a result of Suchness but, at the very least, forms an inseparable relationship with the concept of ālaya-vijñāna. Moreover, the term 'the nature of unawareness' seemingly allows for the interpretation that the notion of ignorance is not merely a passive state representing the absence of correct perception of dharmas but an active characteristic (義, *artha*) of ālaya-vijñāna itself, inducing delusion in sentient beings.

⁵⁰³ “無明熏習所起識者，非凡夫能知，亦非二乘智慧所覺。謂依菩薩，從初正信發心觀察，若證法身得少分知，乃至菩薩究竟地不能知盡，唯佛窮了。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0577b27-c02.

⁵⁰⁴ “復次，覺與不覺有二種相。云何為二？一者、同相，二者、異相。同相者，譬如種種瓦器皆同微塵性相，如是無漏無明種種業幻皆同真如性相。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0577a22-25.

⁵⁰⁵ “依如來藏故有生滅心，所謂不生不滅與生滅和合，非一非異，名為阿梨耶識。此識有二種義，能攝一切法、生一切法。云何為二？一者、覺義，二者、不覺義。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0576b08-11.

These explanations implicitly indicate that the complexity in the ontological understanding of Fundamental Ignorance was an unavoidable issue from the outset of the *Qixin lun*.

In the existing debates surrounding the *Qixin lun*, two main perspectives on understanding this complex issue appear to have been presented. The possibility of both interpretations arises from the *Qixin lun*'s ambiguous portrayal of ālayavijñāna's dichotomous aspects as 'neither the same nor different.' One perspective adopts a monistic view that sees ignorance as inherently subordinate to Suchness, emphasizing a unity or singularity between the two. This approach may account for the issue of the generative basis of ignorance but leads to a logical problem similar to that of theodicy or the problem of evil, in that the pure nature of Suchness is seen as causing the root of impure dharmas. As observed in the debates among early twentieth-century Chinese Buddhist scholars, scholars critical of the *Qixin lun* have adopted this interpretation, pointing out such logical issues as problems within this treatise or Tathāgatagarbha thought. The other is a dualistic perspective that understands Suchness and ignorance as forming a dualistic relationship within the minds of sentient beings. In other words, ignorance is considered the state of mind of sentient beings who have not yet recovered Suchness, namely the state of birth and death (生死). As Chongsik Chun suggests, the state of ignorance even in this interpretation should be ontologically based on Suchness, which means Suchness and ignorance cannot be said on completely equivalent ontological levels;⁵⁰⁶ this approach simply denies the generative relationship between these two notions. However, like the ambiguity found in the *Qixin lun*'s explanations, this approach has the limitation of being unable to provide a clear explanation of the generative basis of the state of Fundamental Ignorance, as it

⁵⁰⁶ Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교* (The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening of Faith by Wonhyo and Fazang) (Seoul: Yehak, 2006), 369-371.

was demonstrated in the treatise as “suddenly (忽然) appear.”⁵⁰⁷

This ambiguous relationship between 'awareness (覺)' and 'non-awareness (不覺)' reappears in the *Qixin lun* in the sections explaining the concepts of non-awareness, initial enlightenment (始覺), and original enlightenment (本覺).⁵⁰⁸ The treatise states, "to explain the meaning of initial enlightenment, there is non-awareness because it relies on original enlightenment, and there is initial enlightenment because it relies on non-awareness."⁵⁰⁹ The lack of a concrete definition for their mutual 'dependence (依)' leaves room for ontological interpretation of these relationships. Perhaps perceiving this relationship between awareness and non-awareness as unclear, commentators like Wonhyo and Fazang have attached extensive annotations to this brief passage of the *Qixin lun*. Intriguingly, these two commentators themselves offer contrasting interpretations of these concepts.

Initially, Wonhyo conceptualizes the ideas of non-awareness, initial enlightenment, and original enlightenment as relative states of mind. In other words, the notion of a starting point towards enlightenment necessarily presupposes the state of non-awareness, thus making the concept of initial enlightenment relatively formed in relation to non-awareness. Similarly, the

⁵⁰⁷ “所謂心性常無念故名為不變，以不達一法界故心不相應，忽然念起名為無明。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0577c05-07.

⁵⁰⁸ In the *Qixin lun*, 'non-awareness (不覺)' encompasses two sub-concepts: *Fundamental non-awareness* (根本不覺) and *Incidental non-awareness* (枝末不覺). Fundamental non-awareness refers to the very root that causes the state of unawareness, essentially pointing to what is discussed in this research as Fundamental Ignorance. On the other hand, Incidental non-awareness describes the process whereby the world of deluded perception is gradually constructed through the ongoing operation of consciousness in a state of ignorance. Thus, if Fundamental non-awareness can be described as the abstract source of delusion, Incidental non-awareness could be seen as the process that unfolds from this source into phenomena. See Chongsik Chun, *대승기신론에 대한 원효·법장의 주석비교* (The Comparison of the Commentaries of the Awakening of Faith by Wonhyo and Fazang) (Seoul: Yehak, 2006), 234.

⁵⁰⁹ “始覺義者，依本覺故而有不覺，依不覺故說有始覺。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0576b15-16.

state of being unenlightened presupposes a state of complete enlightenment, so the concept of non-awareness is relatively formed in relation to original enlightenment. These abstract definitions imply that they are relative to each other and do not indicate an inherent nature of their own.⁵¹⁰ On the other hand, Fazang interprets that the nature of the mind moves according to the 'condition (緣) of ignorance', generating delusory thoughts, but ultimately aligns with original enlightenment due to the inherent permeation power of Suchness. He claims that this interpretation of the three concepts signifies their mutual dependence (依) in the *Qixin lun*.⁵¹¹ Here, Fazang describes fundamental ignorance as the condition (緣) that contaminates the mind, interpreting ignorance not merely as 'a lack of proper understanding' but as the ontological cause of delusion. Furthermore, by employing the concept of 'purification by wisdom (智淨相)' to explain original enlightenment, he lends an ontological interpretation to the idea of initial enlightenment. The explanations of Wonhyo and Fazang, while differing in logic and approach, both develop their interpretations based on Tathāgatagarbha thought of the *Qixin lun*. As with the long-standing debates surrounding the *Qixin lun*, it seems difficult to easily conclude which of these two commentators' interpretations is more reasonable.

One misunderstanding that can arise when the structure of the relationship between

⁵¹⁰ “次釋始覺。於中有二。先顯亦對本覺不覺起義。後對不覺釋始覺義。此中大意。欲明始覺待於不覺。不覺待於本覺。本覺待於始覺。既互相待。則無自性。無自性者。則非有覺。非有覺者。由互相待。相待而成。則非無覺。非無覺故。說名為覺。非有自性名為覺也。略明二覺竟在於前。” Wonhyo (元曉), the *Gishinron so* (起信論疏), T.44.1844.0209a11-17.

⁵¹¹ “始覺義者依本覺故而不覺依不覺故說有始覺 第二始覺中。言始覺者牒名也。依本覺有不覺者。明起始覺之所由。謂即此心體隨無明緣動作妄念。而以本覺內熏習力故。漸有微覺厭求。乃至究竟還同本覺。故云依本覺有不覺依不覺有始覺也。下文云本覺隨染生智淨相者。即此始覺也。此中大意明本覺成不覺。不覺成始覺。始覺同本覺。同本覺故則無不覺。無不覺故則無始覺。無始覺故則無本覺。無本覺故平等平等離言絕慮。” Fazang (法藏), *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0256c18-28.

awareness (覺) and non-awareness (不覺) is not fully understood in Tathāgatagarbha thought, is the argument for the futility of practice based on the notion of original enlightenment (本覺). This argument posits that since Tathāgatagarbha contains the pure intrinsic (內因) and extrinsic conditions (外緣) for awakening, and all phenomena are manifestations based on Tathāgatagarbha, sentient beings are already in a state of Nirvāṇa by their very existence, rendering additional practice unnecessary. This way of understanding has a long history and has recurred as a point of dispute over the notion of original enlightenment in the development of East Asian Buddhism. As seen in the evaluation of the Hongzhou School (洪州宗) by Zongmi (宗密), it has also been used as a means to critique the teachings of other sects.⁵¹² Finding such misunderstandings among modern Buddhist scholars is not a difficult task. For example, Jacqueline Stone writes as follows:

In this medieval Tendai context, “original enlightenment thought” to denotes an array of doctrines and

⁵¹² “洪州意者。起心動念。彈指動目。所作所為。皆是佛性。全體之用。更無別用。全體貪嗔癡。造善造惡。受樂受苦。此皆是佛性。如麪作種種飲食。一一皆麪。意以推求此身。四大骨肉。喉舌牙齒。眼耳手足。並不能自語言。見聞。動作。如一念命終。全身都未變壞。即便口不能語。眼不能見。耳不能聞。脚不能行。手不能作。故知能言語動作者。必是佛性。且四大骨肉。一一細推。都不解貪嗔煩惱。故知貪嗔煩惱並是佛性。佛性體非一切差引種種。而能造作一切差別種種。體非種種者。謂此佛性非聖非凡。非因非果。非善非惡。無色無相。無根無住。乃至無佛無眾生也。能作種種者。謂此性即體之用。故能凡能聖。能因能根。能善能惡。現色現相。能佛能眾生。乃至能貪嗔等。若覈其體性。則畢竟不可見。不可證。如眼不自見眼等。若就其應用。即舉動運為。一切皆是。更無別法而為能證所證。彼意准楞伽經云。如來藏是善不善因。能遍興造一切趣生。受苦樂。與因俱。又。佛語心。經云。或有佛剎揚眉動睛。笑吹警欬。或動搖等皆是佛事。既悟解之理。一切天真自然。故所修行。理宜順此。而乃不起心斷惡。亦不起心修道。道即是心。不可將心還修於心。惡亦是心。不可將心還斷於心。不斷不造。任運自在。名為解脫人。無法可拘。無佛可作。猶如虛空不增不減。何假添補。何以故。心性之外。更無一法可得故。故但任心。即為修也。評曰。此與前宗敵體相返。前則朝暮分別。動作一切皆妄。此則朝暮分別。動作一切皆真。奉問疑其互相詆訛。暮肯會同。且所見如此相違。爭不詆訛。若存他。則失己。爭肯會同。” Zongmi (宗密), the *Zhonghua chuan xindi chanmen shizi chengxi tu* (中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖), X.63.1225.0033a22-c01.

concepts associated with the proposition that all beings are enlightened inherently. Not only human beings, but ants and crickets, mountains and rivers, grasses and trees are all innately Buddhas. The Buddhas who appear in sūtras, radiating light and endowed with excellent marks, are merely provisional signs. The “real” Buddha is the ordinary worldling. Indeed, the whole phenomenal world is the primordially enlightened Tathāgata. Seen in their true light, all forms of daily conduct, even one’s delusive thoughts, are, without transformation, the expressions of original enlightenment. Liberation is reimagined, not as the eradication of mental defilements or as achieving birth in a pure land after death, but as the insight, or even the faith, that one has been enlightened from the very beginning. ... The teaching of origination from suchness in effect grounds the arising of phenomena in the one pure mind and thus obliterates any ontological distinction between them. It is only because of adventitious nonenlightenment that deluded thoughts appear, producing the distinction of subject and object and thus leading to the notion of self and other as real entities, and to craving, attachment, and enmeshment in samsaric misery. Liberation lies in discerning that the differentiated phenomena of the samsaric world are, in their essence, no different from the one mind and thus originally pure.⁵¹³

The passage presents an ontological interpretation of original enlightenment (本覺) that equates phenomena with the true aspect of the mind, Suchness. However, this interpretation somewhat misreads the theoretical structure of Tathāgatagarbha thought. As previously discussed, the foundational theory of mind in the *Qixin lun* delineates One Mind as comprising two aspects: the aspect of birth and death (心生滅門) and the aspect of Suchness (心真如門), with the latter being fundamental to the former, and no reverse relationship is feasible. This treatise emphasizes the presence of fundamental ignorance as the root which precipitates all discrimination and delusion; ignorance leads to the emergence of three types of fine afflictions (三細) and six types of coarse afflictions (六麤), functioning as cause and conditions that give rise to phenomena.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 3-7.

⁵¹⁴ “依不覺故生三種相，與彼不覺相應不離。云何為三？一者、無明業相。以依不覺故心動，說名為業；覺則不動。動則有苦，果不離因故。二者、能見相。以依動故能見；不動則無見。三者、境界相。以依能見故境界妄現；離見則無境界。以有境界緣故，復生六種相。云何為六？一者、智相。依於境界，心起分別愛與不愛故。二者相續相。依於智故生其苦樂，覺心起念相應不斷故。三者、執取相。依於相續緣念境界，住持苦樂，心起著故。四者、計名字相。依於妄執，分別假名言相故。五者、起業相。依於名字，尋名取著，造種種業故。六者、業繫苦相。以依業受果不自在故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0577a07-20.

This structure elucidates that while contaminated phenomena are manifestations based on Suchness, they are not directly emanated from Suchness as their cause (因).⁵¹⁵ The arising and ceasing of phenomena not directly rooted in the Ground (體) and Attributes (相) of Suchness are merely delusions produced by the confused mind. It should be noted this rebuttal does not entirely negate the manifestation of phenomena as directly caused by Suchness. As examined earlier, the mind of sentient beings is capable of manifesting pure functions, which were directly caused (因) by the Ground and Attributes of Suchness.

Therefore, the Qixin lun further states:

In all Buddhist teachings, there are causes (因) and conditions (緣), and only when these causes and conditions are fully met can the teachings be realized. ... Likewise, sentient beings possess the intrinsic capacity to be influenced by the correct cause (正因), which is Suchness, but if they do not *encounter* and *have* (爲) Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and wise teachers serve as conditions, they cannot cut off their afflictions and enter Nirvāṇa on their own. Conversely, if one has external conditions but has not fully cultivated the internal power of the true Dharma's permeation, they will not desire to ultimately escape the suffering of birth and death nor seek Nirvāṇa. However, if one possesses both internal and external cause and conditions, they are said to have the self-permeating power and receive the compassionate support of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. As a result, they arise the mind that seeks to avoid the suffering of birth and death, believes in the ultimate goal of Nirvāṇa, and through practice cultivates virtuous roots (善根) ... making progress towards the realization of Nirvāṇa.⁵¹⁶

Encountering Bodhisattvas, wise teachers, and actively seeking them as mentors to learn and

⁵¹⁵ “云何熏習起染法不斷？所謂以依真如法故有於無明，以有無明染法因故即熏習真如；以熏習故則有妄心，以有妄心即熏習無明。不了真如法故，不覺念起現妄境界。以有妄境界染法緣故，即熏習妄心，令其念著造種種業，受於一切身心等苦。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0578a21-27.

⁵¹⁶ “又諸佛法有因有緣，因緣具足乃得成辦。... 眾生亦爾，雖有正因熏習之力，若不值遇諸佛菩薩善知識等以之為緣，能自斷煩惱入涅槃者，則無是處。若雖有外緣之力，而內淨法未有熏習力者，亦不能究竟厭生死苦、樂求涅槃。若因緣具足者，所謂自有熏習之力，又為諸佛菩薩等慈悲願護故，能起厭苦之心，信有涅槃，修習善根。...向涅槃道。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0578c03-14.

implement their teachings signifies an active engagement and acceptance of guidance. While it's true that the Attributes and Function of Suchness provide sentient beings with intrinsic and extrinsic support, sentient beings still need to rely on their belief in this inner strength and decide to follow external conditions. This requires their choice and effort, and only through this can the internal cause, along with external conditions, be fulfilled, enabling practitioners to progress on the path to Nirvāṇa.⁵¹⁷ Therefore, practices to achieve awakening remain essential for practitioners. Contrastingly, Jacqueline Stone's interpretation appears to suggest that merely having faith in one's inherent Buddha-nature suffices for awakening. Faith is indeed crucial as the starting point of practice, but this does not logically imply that removing mental defilements is unnecessary or can be skipped. Instead, practitioners must actively engage in self-directed practices to remove these defilements. The *Qixin lun*'s emphasis on the necessity of practice supports this interpretation.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, the *Qixin lun* asserts that having faith in one's inherent Suchness is critical for advancing towards enlightenment, necessitating the practice of the Five

⁵¹⁷ As previously examined, according to the *Qixin lun* the permeation by Functions of Suchness (用熏習) can manifest externally for practitioners. This could seemingly support the argument for the futility of practice. However, it is crucial to understand that the external permeation by Suchness does not magically create non-existent, illusory teachers. Such an interpretation would be considered inappropriate in most Buddhist traditions. Instead, it would be a more natural sense to understand the permeation by Suchness as a force that enables practitioners to properly recognize the value of teachers and wise mentors around them, accepting and learning from them. For instance, sentient beings, whose minds are contaminated by afflictions, might not realize the presence of a proper teacher in their vicinity and may overlook them. Or, some might not have encountered such teachers at all. The permeation by Suchness encourages these beings to seek out correct teachers or to become closer to those around them, similar to how the intrinsic permeation by Suchness (自體相熏習) motivates practitioners to distaste suffering and seek Nirvāṇa. In summary, while practitioners indeed receive help both internally and externally by Suchness, this does not necessarily mean that practice is unnecessary. Instead, it emphasizes the need for practitioners to actively choose their teachers and engage in practices towards enlightenment based on their own will and intention.

⁵¹⁸ “Thus, the Dharma-body nature of sentient beings' Suchness is empty and pure, yet it is afflicted with innumerable defilements and impurities. If a person, even though mindful of Suchness, does not cultivate it through various skillful means and practices, purity cannot be attained. This is because the defilements are innumerable and pervade all phenomena; therefore, cultivating all kinds of virtuous practices serves as the antidote. If a person practices all virtuous Dharmas, it naturally conforms to the Dharma of Suchness. (如是眾生真如之法體性空淨，而有無量煩惱染垢。若人雖念真如，不以方便種種熏修，亦無得淨。以垢無量遍一切法故，修一切善行以為對治。若人修行一切善法，自然歸順真如法故。)” Ibid., T.32.1666.0580c14-18.

Practices (五行), with the text extensively delineating these practices. In this interpretation, the meaning of 'original enlightenment' is limited to the understanding that all sentient beings inherently possess Suchness, which serves as both the basis for and auxiliary function towards achieving enlightenment.

Thus, the rebuttal to the argument for the futility of practice based on the *Qixin lun* can be summarized into two main points: 1) While all functions in phenomena are indeed manifested based on Suchness, not all of them directly emanate from the purity of Suchness as their cause. Those that arise due to ignorance and afflictions must be actively eliminated through practice to advance towards Nirvāṇa. 2) The pure intrinsic and extrinsic permeations of Suchness certainly aid sentient beings in developing a distaste for the cycle of birth and death and moving towards Nirvāṇa. However, this aid remains an auxiliary function. To cultivate faith in Suchness and Nirvāṇa, recognize encounters with wise teachers as opportunities, and embrace their teachings, sentient beings must actively make choices and engage in voluntary practices.

3.4.4.3 The Structural Similarities with Hindu Tradition of Ātman and the Critical Buddhism Movement

Another major line of criticism triggered by the emphasis on the immutability of Tathāgatagarbha thought relates to the claim that Tathāgatagarbha thought inherits ideological characteristics from other religious traditions in India before Buddhism, considered heterodox from the Buddhist perspective. In particular, some contemporary Buddhist scholars, based on the centrality of the non-self (無我, *anātman*) concept in early Buddhism as a counter to Brahmanic

thought, tend to critically react to any elements within the Buddhist tradition that could be interpreted as similar to Brahmanic thought, labeling them as anti-Buddhist. This reaction has been particularly pronounced in relation to Tathāgatagarbha thought, with one of the most frequent criticisms being its positing of an immutable (常住不動) self and subsequent developments, which resemble ideas of the self or soul found in Hindu thought, such as those in the Advaita Vedānta tradition.⁵¹⁹ As discussed above regarding the understanding of the concept of the self in Tathāgatagarbha thought, indeed, it often expresses Buddha-nature or Tathāgatagarbha in positive terms such as 'empty but profoundly exists (真空妙有),' and sometimes even employs terms like 'self (我)' or 'True Self (真我)' to refer to them.⁵²⁰ Moreover, as seen earlier, these concepts are not merely rhetorical expressions or expedient means but are part of a sophisticated theoretical structure closely linked to the realm of practice for enlightenment. Due to these philosophical characteristics, the criticism that Tathāgatagarbha thought contradicts Buddhism's fundamental teachings of non-self and dependent origination has been one of the primary critiques against it. A notable figure who has connected the teachings of Tathāgatagarbha to Brahmanic thought and criticized it is Yinshun.⁵²¹ Additionally, towards the end of the twentieth century, centered around Japanese Buddhist scholars, Tathāgatagarbha was interpreted as a form of 'substantialism,' leading to radical claims that Tathāgatagarbha thought is not only not true Buddhism but also a reiteration of Indian ātman thought, forming a significant

⁵¹⁹ Anthony Rudd, "No Self? Some Reflections on Buddhist Theories of Personal Identity," *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 3 (2015): 880-881.

⁵²⁰ Wonkyung, "여래장사상에 대한 재고찰 [A Restudy of the 'Tathāgata-garbha Thought]," *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* (韓國佛教學) 29 (2001): 182.

⁵²¹ Huanzhen Feng (馮煥珍), "Dasheng qixin lun fei fojiao ma 《大乘起信論》「非佛教」嗎—關於「起信論」非佛教說的教理學反省 (Is the *Qixin lun* not Buddhist?: A Theological Reflection on the Claim that the '*Qixin lun* is Not Buddhist')," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* (中華佛學研) 09 (2005): 34-35.

discourse.⁵²²

The question of what constitutes "true Buddhism" has recurred throughout the history of Buddhism's transmission. However, when posed by contemporary Japanese Buddhologists Noriaki Hakamaya (袴谷 憲昭) and Shiro Matsumoto (松本 史朗) in the late twentieth century, their inquiry resonated significantly across Western and Eastern academic circles. Their responses to this question were influenced by the cultural and political climate of contemporary Japan and came to be known under the title of *Critical Buddhism* (批判佛教, Japanese: *Hihan bukkyō*).⁵²³ This movement initially emerged from a period of introspection within the Japanese Sōtō institution (曹洞宗, Japanese: *Sōtō shū*), prompted by concerns over social discriminations, particularly those affecting the outcast groups (部落民, Japanese: *Buraku min*).⁵²⁴ In 1979, Muneo Machida (町田 宗夫), the then-secretary-general of the Sōtō institution, publicly denied the existence of social discrimination in Japan at the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Princeton, New Jersey. This denial was met with strong criticism from members of the outcast groups, accusing Machida of concealing societal discrimination to boost Japan's international image. In response to the backlash, in 1984, the Sōtō institution publicly apologized for

⁵²² Robert Sharf, "Buddha-nature, Critical Buddhism, and Early Chan," *Critical Review for Buddhist Studies* 22 (2017): 112; In his paper, Sharf does not outright deny the claims of Critical Buddhism. Rather, his fundamental attitude appears more aligned with that of Critical Buddhists. However, he argues that the adoption of Tathāgatagarbha thought in Chinese Chan Buddhism was influenced by a more complex historical background, and there was a minority resistance towards an 'immanentist reading' of the Tathāgatagarbha concept. Hence, he advocates that the Chan tradition should not be simply dismissed as 'anti-Buddhism'.

⁵²³ According to Chen-kuo Lin, "Critical Buddhism" is a neologism first coined by Noriaki Hakamaya in the process of contrasting what he considers orthodox Buddhism with the Tathāgatagarbha thought, which he views as a sinicized and contaminated idea. See Chen-kuo Lin, "Metaphysics, Suffering, and Liberation: The Debate between Two Buddhisms," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 303.

⁵²⁴ Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, eds., *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), ix-xii.

Machida's statement, and he resigned from his position. The following year, the institution established the committee for examining the doctrine (曹洞宗教學審議會), which included Hakamaya and Matsumoto, both professors at Komazawa (駒澤) University—a university founded by the institution of Sōtō school. Their subsequent work addressing the identified issues laid the groundwork for what would later be recognized as the Critical Buddhism movement.

While Machida's statement catalyzed the Critical Buddhism movement, its roots extend into Japan's deeper social fabric. Post-war Japan grappled with pervasive issues such as social discrimination and Buddhist communities' reflection on their support for Japanese imperialism. Additionally, as Jamie Hubbard highlights, two other contextual factors contributed to the emergence of Critical Buddhism: the conservative shift in Japan's political landscape at the time and a predilection among Japanese Buddhologists for making public declarations. Therefore, the foundational issues of Critical Buddhism's emergence were deeply entwined with the broader societal context.⁵²⁵ Therefore, it can be argued that these contextual backgrounds, particularly the critical reevaluation of societal and doctrinal stances within Japanese Buddhism, were foundational to the movement's emergence. However, Hakamaya and Matsumoto shifted the focus towards interpreting Buddhist doctrines through an analytic methodology aimed at addressing the social challenges they identified, thereby extending the discourse of Critical Buddhism beyond its original context. The doctrinal interpretations advanced by Critical Buddhism sought to expose the precarious tension between opposing interpretations of emptiness and self, central concepts across Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions. Consequently, the responses provided by Critical Buddhism introduced further inquiries into the doctrinal interpretation of

⁵²⁵ Ibid., ix-xii.

Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in relation to Tathāgatagarbha thought. While Critical Buddhism may not currently attract substantial attention among contemporary scholars, the questions raised by its proponents continue to demand thoughtful consideration and responses.

Critical Buddhism aimed at any Buddhist traditions they perceived as endorsing substantialism. This critique primarily focused on ideas such as Tathāgatagarbha, the Original Enlightenment (本覺, Japanese: *hongaku*), Huayan, Yogācāra, and the Kyōto School (京都学派, Japanese: *Kyōto gakuha*), although the most pronounced critiques by Critical Buddhists, notably Shiro Matsumoto, were directed towards Tathāgatagarbha and *hongaku* teachings. Matsumoto's critique centers on Tathāgatagarbha thought and its interpretation of dependent origination, which he characterizes with the term *dhātu-vāda*. *Dhātu-vāda* represents the viewpoint that posits an underlying ontological foundation from which all phenomena emerge, as exemplified in the *Qixin lun*. Matsumoto's critique can be distilled into two main aspects: doctrinal and socio-contextual.

Doctrinally, Matsumoto contends that only the early Buddhist teachings of non-self (無我, *anātman*) and dependent origination (緣起, *pratīyasamutpāda*) constitute the essence of true Buddhism.⁵²⁶ Tathāgatagarbha thought, with its philosophical underpinnings that contradict these core teachings, is deemed a substantialist deviation influenced by the Brahmanic notion of *Ātman*.⁵²⁷ From a socio-contextual perspective, Matsumoto argues that the ontological framework of *dhātu-vāda*, which views phenomena as manifestations of an underlying essence,

⁵²⁶ Shiro Matsumoto, "The Doctrine of Tathāgata-garbha is not Buddhist," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 165.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

fundamentally supports the differentiation among phenomena. This philosophical stance, he suggests, underpins and justifies social discrimination within Japanese society.⁵²⁸

In response to Matsumoto's critiques, another forefront figure of the Critical Buddhism movement, Noriaki Hakamaya, expressed full agreement with him. Hakamaya's viewpoint is similar to Matsumoto's: He perceived the notion of the Original Enlightenment, as exemplified in Tathāgatagarbha thought, to be in contradiction with the Buddhist orthodox teaching of non-self and saw its 'ineffability' as opposing original Buddhism's teachings, which seek intellectual, logical, and linguistic transmission. On this basis, Hakamaya argued that the notion of Original Enlightenment is equivalent to the "Brahmanist doctrine of ātman" or "Taoist naturalism."⁵²⁹ Furthermore, according to Hakamaya, Matsumoto's critique of Tathāgatagarbha thought is valid in narrowly defining the most essential meaning of the notion of *dharma* (法) as "characteristics (of phenomena)" and excluding its interpretation as "substance." This approach sees the essence of Buddhism solely in terms of impermanence (or non-self) and dependent origination, which Hakamaya highly praises as a method of argument against traditions susceptible to a substantialist interpretation, mentioning "no need to add anything" to Matsumoto's critique.⁵³⁰

Hakamaya's critique of Tathāgatagarbha thought is characterized by its notably radical and forthright tone. In his well-known work *Critical Buddhism* (批判佛教, Japanese: *Hihan*

⁵²⁸ "In other words, the singular (equal) nature of L [(the essential nature)] does not serve to eradicate the plurality (differences) of S [(phenomena)], but rather acts as the basic support to maintain that plurality. Clearly, dhātu-vāda encompasses an ideology of social discrimination." See *Ibid.*, 170-172.

⁵²⁹ Chen-kuo Lin, "Metaphysics, Suffering, and Liberation: The Debate between Two Buddhisms," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 304.

⁵³⁰ Noriaki Hakamaya, "和辻博士における'法'と'空'理解の問題点 (The Problematic Aspects in Dr. Watsuji's Understanding of 'Dharma' and 'Emptiness')," in *Hihan Bukkyō* (批判佛教), trans. Seungjun Ahn, *Korean Journal of Indian Buddhism* (印度哲學) 6 (1996): 306-315.

bukkyō), he not only argues that Tathāgatagarbha thought is ‘not Buddhism’ but also denounces it as "anti-intellectual" and "anti-logical."⁵³¹ He goes as far as to describe scholars defending Tathāgatagarbha or Original Enlightenment thought as “pseudo-scholars” who should be “eliminated,” using strong language.⁵³² Moreover, criticizing Tetsurō Watsuji's (和辻 哲郎) claim—which closely resembles Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought—that the dharmas (妙有 or 事) in phenomena manifest interdependently and are fundamentally based on emptiness (眞空), which is the principle (理), Hakamaya denounces it as "the worst understanding that destroy Buddhism."⁵³³

With the emergence of Critical Buddhism, Matsumoto's term *dhātu-vāda* became one of the most discussed concepts in Buddhist discourse worldwide. However, encapsulating Matsumoto's critique of Tathāgatagarbha thought within a single term simplifies the complexity of his arguments, which are both intriguing and contentious. Matsumoto distinguishes between the "inherent Buddha-nature interpretation (佛性內在論)" prevalent in early Tathāgatagarbha thought and the "present Buddha-nature interpretation (佛性現在論)" of later developments, critiquing only the former as contaminated by influences from Indian Ātman philosophy. He defines the inherent Buddha-nature interpretation as the belief that all sentient beings contain the embryo of enlightenment within them, and everything manifests from this Buddha-nature, a notion solidified through the *Qixin lun*. To support his argument equating the concept of "self (我)" in this interpretation with the Ātman concept, he points to scriptures like the *Niepan jing* (涅槃經)

⁵³¹ Ibid., 313.

⁵³² Ibid., 324.

⁵³³ Ibid., 320.

槃經) and *Lengjia jing* (楞伽經), where the term "self (我)" is described as synonymous with Buddha and possessing the Four Virtues.⁵³⁴ Moreover, Matsumoto cites the concept of "spiritual cognition (靈知)" as found in Zongmi's *Chanyuan zhuquan ji duxu* (禪源諸詮集都序) as an example, effectively equating the concepts of Buddha-nature, Ātman, spiritual cognition, and spirituality (靈性). He identifies eminent monks such as Shenhui (神會), Zongmi, and Linji (臨濟) as proponents of the inherent Buddha-nature interpretation, implicitly suggesting that many monks who relied on Tathāgatagarbha thought before these figures would fall into this category. He also includes modern Buddhist scholars like D.T. Suzuki and Kitarō Nishida in his critique.⁵³⁵

Conversely, Matsumoto uses the term present Buddha-nature interpretation to describe the view that all manifested phenomena are already Buddha-nature and Nirvāṇa, essentially the concept of dependent origination based on Suchness (眞如緣起). He names monks like Huizhong (慧忠) and the Japanese monk Dōgen (道元) as advocates of this interpretation. To critique the inherent Buddha-nature interpretation while supporting the present Buddha-nature interpretation, Matsumoto primarily utilizes Dōgen's writings. For instance, Matsumoto references Dōgen's critique in *Bendō wa* (辨道話), which posits that the belief in an intrinsic spiritual cognition (靈知) that enables us to discern right from wrong and our likes and dislikes, and that influences our aversion to pleasure and pain, aligns with heterodox views. Matsumoto then describes these interpretations as presenting divergent understandings of Tathāgatagarbha thought, seemingly

⁵³⁴ Shiro Matsumoto, “佛性と靈性 (Buddha-nature and Spirituality),” *Korean Journal of Indian Buddhism* (印度哲學) 41 (2014): 23-27.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-28.

positioning them as contrary to one another.⁵³⁶ The term "spiritual cognition" here refers to Zongmi's concept, suggesting that it leads to avoiding pleasure and pain and correctly seeking enlightenment, similar to the notions of Attributes (相) and Function (用) of Suchness in the *Qixin lun*. From this standpoint, Matsumoto finds Dōgen's critical approach to the interpretive trends of early Tathāgatagarbha thought, particularly its ethical dimension mediated by the inherent characteristics of Suchness, to be reasonable and justifiable.

Matsumoto's stance, which partially criticizes Tathāgatagarbha thought by dichotomizing it, appears to have a significant philosophical issue; this because the "present Buddha-nature interpretation" Matsumoto advocates effectively shares the fundamental ontological framework of Tathāgatagarbha thought—that all phenomena emerge from Suchness, the absolute foundation. The logical basis for seeing all phenomena as both Suchness and enlightenment in Matsumoto's interpretation relies on their emergence from Suchness. For this causal relationship to be solid, Suchness and its functions must be understood as universal, leading to the a priori reasoning that Suchness inherently exists in all beings. Thus, what Matsumoto describes through Dōgen as the "present Buddha-nature interpretation" is essentially a rejection of additional moral characteristics attributed to Suchness rather than a denial of the distinctive ontological framework of Suchness and phenomena present in Tathāgatagarbha thought. Consequently, Matsumoto's criticism based on this dichotomous structure to equate Suchness with Ātman and critique the "inherent Buddha-nature interpretation" seems logically inconsistent when he subsequently endorses the "present Buddha-nature interpretation," which adopts the same ontological structure. This inconsistency undermines the persuasiveness of his argument.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 22-23.

Another problem observed among Critical Buddhists is that their critique of Tathāgatagarbha thought, which presupposes that only the teachings of dependent origination and non-self constitute *true* Buddhism, follows a form of fundamentalist argumentation to some extent.⁵³⁷ They regard only the concepts of emptiness (空) and middle-path (中道), stretching from Śākyamuni to Nagarjuna, as the sole orthodox teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism; and they categorize Tathāgatagarbha thought as heterodox or a corrupted form of Buddhism, asserting it was influenced by Ātman philosophy and progressively degraded in China and Japan. To label them as fundamentalists based solely on this viewpoint could be unduly dismissive, given their lack of effort to seek philological or historical validation for their belief that only non-self and dependent origination represent the true teachings of Śākyamuni. This indicates that their fundamental goal might not be restoring the historical teachings of Śākyamuni, and thus, simplistically disparaging them as fundamentalists could be unduly harsh.⁵³⁸ Nonetheless, their adoption of a fundamentalist viewpoint to denounce Tathāgatagarbha thought as non-Buddhist

⁵³⁷ This fundamentalist perspective can also be said to have appeared to some extent in the debates among modern Chinese Buddhist scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century, preceding the Critical Buddhism movement. This is particularly conspicuous in the 'Genuine Buddhism' discernment process led by figures such as Lü Cheng and Liang Qichao. They considered only the Sanskrit versions of Buddhist scriptures as the true teachings of the Buddha and disparaged texts composed in China or philosophies developed from them as 'contaminated.' While some may argue that it is excessive to interpret their stance as fundamentalist, citing that Lü Cheng included translated Yogācāra texts among the true teachings. However, this acknowledgment was possible only after thorough comparisons with their Sanskrit originals to ensure that the translations did not significantly deviate from the original meanings. This approach is further exemplified by Lü Cheng's critique, based on comparative analyses of various versions of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, that Bodhiruci's translation failed to accurately convey the original teachings.

The determination of whether their perspective can be considered fundamentalist depends partially on their attitude towards elements that have evolved or been newly introduced over the course of history. As previously mentioned, Lü Cheng regarded such developments as 'contaminations,' thereby taking an extreme stance that devalued them. This stance implies a presumption that only the contents recorded in Sanskrit originals embody the true teachings of the Buddha. Thus, despite possible degrees of variation, it can be argued that they still embrace a fundamentalist viewpoint. For a brief overview of Lü Cheng's concept of *Genuine Buddhism*, refer to the following: Dan Lusthaus, "Lü Cheng, Epistemology, and Genuine Buddhism," in *Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, ed. John Makeham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 319-322.

⁵³⁸ Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, eds., *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), xii-xiii

cannot be denied.

To address the issues involved in their viewpoint, it is essential to acknowledge that Tathāgatagarbha thought had already begun to establish its conceptual foundations within the early Mahāyāna tradition in India. Moreover, as previously discussed, the evolution of Tathāgatagarbha thought could naturally emerge from attempts within traditional Buddhism to resolve philosophical dilemmas surrounding the notion of the self. Even if we accept Critical Buddhists' argument that Tathāgatagarbha thought likely developed through interactions with the doctrines of other religions within India's intricate cultural milieu, it does not fully substantiate their critique of Tathāgatagarbha as merely a distortion within Chinese or Japanese Buddhism. Furthermore, while pursuing truth itself is not inherently wrong, the fundamentalist preoccupation with determining what is 'genuine' invariably leans towards extremism. For instance, Matsumoto supports Dōgen's 'present Buddha-nature interpretation' as correct teaching, and Hakamaya considers Nagarjuna's concept of emptiness as still embodying Śākyamuni's truth. Yet, these concepts were not explicitly mentioned in the early Buddhist or sectarian Buddhist traditions for centuries. Should one adopt an even more fundamentalist stance, arguing that the concept of emptiness is an alteration that emerged with the advent of Mahāyāna and thus not the true teaching of Śākyamuni, the proponents of Critical Buddhism, employing the same logic, would find themselves lacking counterarguments. In other words, the critique against Tathāgatagarbha thought could serve as a weapon to criticize all Mahāyāna traditions not based on the early Pāli canon, which aligns with the 'Mahāyāna as non-Buddhism' argument (大乘非佛説) first proposed by Senjō Murakami (村上 専精).⁵³⁹ Additionally, as Luis Ó. Gómez points out,

⁵³⁹ Murakami's radical claims caused significant shock and antagonism within the Japanese Buddhist community at the time. Due to the controversy he stirred and the resistance from the Buddhist community, Murakami was forced

the earliest recorded Pāli scriptures were orally transmitted and only compiled through four times of councils (結集) after five hundred years of Śākyamuni's death, making it nearly impossible to prove that Śākyamuni's original voice was transmitted without alteration.⁵⁴⁰ From this perspective, the fundamentalist approach of Critical Buddhists towards understanding Buddhism risks significantly losing the meaning and cogency of seeking what Śākyamuni's genuine teachings were.

Matsumoto and Hakamaya's critiques of Tathāgatagarbha thought can be contested from multiple perspectives. For instance, proponents of Tathāgatagarbha thought might argue that its framework remains consistent with the teachings of non-self and dependent origination, as both Tathāgatagarbha and early Buddhist traditions view the empirical self as being constituted by conditions within the realm of birth and death. As previously examined, the notion of the self within Tathāgatagarbha thought can be categorized into two types, with the empirical self considered as transient. At least regarding the concept of the empirical self, interpretations within the Tathāgatagarbha tradition do not significantly diverge from the early Mahāyāna notion of emptiness (空, *śūnyatā*) or the preceding notion of non-self. Although it might appear that Tathāgatagarbha thought shares some ontological characteristics which can be interpreted as

to renounce his ordination in the Japanese Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗) sect. See Fumihiko Sueki, “現代日本仏教の動向と課題 (Trends and Challenges in Modern Japanese Buddhism),” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* Special Volume (2007): 77.

⁵⁴⁰ Gregory Schopen, “Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism,” *History of Religions* 31 (1991): 1-4; In addition to these points, citing research by K. R. Norman and O. von Hinüber, Gregory Schopen highlights that the current Pāli Canons have all undergone at least one process of translation and that most of the extant Pāli Canon documents were created after the late 18th century, having passed through the hands of various monks over a long history. Based on such archaeological and epigraphical evidence, Schopen criticizes the modern scholars' preference for certain sources of Indian Buddhist literature as a “peculiar” preference without scholarly justification. He argues that rather than solely relying on textual records to pursue true religious teachings, greater attention should be paid to archaeological and epigraphical evidence, which can reveal what monks and laypeople actually believed and practiced throughout history.

substantialism, its ontological basis is not a being empirically constituted. The term "permanent (常)" in general sense tends to imply the continuity of existence. However, the concept of neither arising nor ceasing (不生不滅) within Tathāgatagarbha understanding of Suchness leans more towards being *unconditional* rather than enduring, aligning with early Mahāyāna viewpoints; Suchness *itself* never appears in time and space, thereby implying the absence of disappearance. In other words, Suchness, characterized by emptiness or the nature of neither arising nor ceasing, does *not exist* within phenomena. Accordingly, the concept of a True Self is not an empirical object, and in a strict sense, its being is ineffable, not forming a subject-object (主客) dualism with phenomena. Thus, it could be argued that this notion of the True Self does not necessarily conflict the traditional concept of non-self. This point could be a particularly strong counterargument to Matsumoto, especially in his advocacy for a "present Buddha-nature interpretation" evolved from Tathāgatagarbha thought.

Regarding the contention that Tathāgatagarbha thought underpins social discrimination in Japan, a critical reassessment aimed at Critical Buddhism, particularly the interpretations advanced by Matsumoto, posits a fundamental misreading of its teaching. This misinterpretation conflates the *descriptive* account of dependent origination based on Suchness, as articulated within *Qixin lun*, with *prescriptive* norms. Matsumoto's analysis reveals that Tathāgatagarbha regards diverse phenomena as manifestations from the foundational consciousness of the mind, yet this does not implicitly endorse or legitimize discriminatory practices. On the contrary, Tathāgatagarbha thought invites introspection into the origins and contexts of such discriminative perceptions, advocating for their subjugation through the recognition of their illusory basis in misapprehension. Consequently, attributing societal discriminations directly to

the doctrinal essence of Tathāgatagarbha not only misconstrues its descriptive exposition as normative guidance but also overlooks its integral aim: the dissolution of illusory distinctions through enlightenment to the inherent unity of all existence.

I posit that, beyond the issue of social discrimination in Japan and the question of Buddhism's orthodoxy, there was another political impetus behind Matsumoto and Hakamaya's critique of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought. This can be expressed as the fear among post-World War II scholars that distorted Buddhism could once again be exploited as a political ideology in Japan. Indeed, Hakamaya and Matsumoto seem to suspect that, following the Pacific War, scholars like Tetsurō Watsuji had utilized Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought to propagate an emperor-centered 'totalitarianism'. Their research reveals a concern for the possibility of such a situation recurring.⁵⁴¹ Furthermore, their work articulates concerns that the concept of

⁵⁴¹ Noriaki Hakamaya, “和辻博士における‘法’と‘空’理解の問題点 (The Problematic Aspects in Dr. Watsuji's Understanding of 'Dharma' and 'Emptiness'),” in *Hihan Bukkyō* (批判佛教), trans. Seungjun Ahn, *Korean Journal of Indian Buddhism* (印度哲學) 6 (1996): 325-328; also see, Shiro Matsumoto, “佛性と靈性 (Buddha-nature and Spirituality),” *Korean Journal of Indian Buddhism* (印度哲學) 41 (2014): 31-32; It has been confirmed through various studies that the Japanese Sōtō sect actively collaborated with Japanese imperialism during the World War era. For instance, according to the research of Nam-lin Hur, the Sōtō sect viewed the Japanese Empire's invasion of neighboring countries as an opportunity for overseas missionary work, establishing an organization for this purpose as early as 1899 and beginning collaboration with the Japanese Imperial government. Their sectarian strategy aligned with the goals of the Japanese colonial administration at the time, aiming to secure control over overseas territories. Consequently, the colonial administration supported the Sōtō sect, allowing the establishment of its temples within colonial territories. By the time of Japan's defeat in 1945, there were as many as 103 Sōtō temples established in Korea. Hur outlines the objectives of the Sōtō sect's overseas missionary activities as follows: 1) Supporting the Japanese military through funeral and memorial services. 2) Facilitating the assimilation of occupied peoples into Imperial subjects. 3) Achieving political stability in occupied territories through religious integration. Given this context, it is somewhat understandable that scholars associated with educational institutions under the Sōtō sect, such as Hakamaya and Matsumoto, would be cautious about Buddhism being used as a tool for war. However, excluding such motives and attributing the causes of the problems solely to Tathāgatagarbha thought seems not to be a sufficiently rational conclusion. See, Nam-Lin Hur, “The Sōtō Sect and Japanese Military Imperialism in Korea,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 107-126; For studies on the collaboration of Japanese Buddhism with Japanese imperialism, refer to the following: Eiichi Otani, “전쟁은 죄악인가?: 20세기 초 일본불교에서의 반전론 [Is War a Sin?: Pacifism of Japanese Buddhism in Early 20th Century],” trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 185-187; Keiichi Harada, “일본에서의 전쟁과 종교 [War and Religion in Japan],” trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 118-131; Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern

'spirituality (靈性),' which had become popular in Japan from the late nineteenth century under the influence of D.T. Suzuki, Kitaro Nishida, and others, might embody similar totalitarian thinking. According to Matsumoto, the essence of seeking the 'True Self' in Tathāgatagarbha thought corresponds to this notion of spirituality.⁵⁴² While their aversion to Tathāgatagarbha thought based on historical and political contexts might be somewhat understandable, it must be noted that such political motives cannot serve as a scholarly basis to claim Tathāgatagarbha thought as non-Buddhist. This is because Tathāgatagarbha thought had already completed its theoretical framework in China during the Sui and Tang dynasties or even earlier, independent of Japan's political developments. Even if Tathāgatagarbha thought was appropriated by Japanese political entities for their objectives during the Pacific War, this exploitation reflects issues with their ethical integrity, rather than constituting a valid ground for doctrinal criticism against Tathāgatagarbha thought itself.

Despite the criticisms and possible rebuttals to the Critical Buddhism movement, the claim that Tathāgatagarbha thought resembles the Ātman doctrine of India merits closer examination. Generally, in the Upanishadic tradition, Ātman and Brahman are considered ontologically identical, a relationship that differs from the ontological relationship between Suchness and the 'realm of dharmas (法界, *Dharmadhātu*)' in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought. If the relationship between Ātman and Brahman is seen as the identity of the *absolute individual* with the *absolute universal*, then the relationship between Suchness and the Dharmadhātu in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought is closer to that between the absolute and

Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 281-297; Yongsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 13-33

⁵⁴² Shiro Matsumoto, “佛性と靈性 (Buddha-nature and Spirituality),” *Korean Journal of Indian Buddhism* (印度哲學) 41 (2014): 29.

the phenomenal, i.e., between the *noumenon* and *phenomena*. In the Huayan tradition, equating the concept of the Dharmadhātu with both the phenomenal world and Suchness itself seems rhetorically reasonable only after the primary relationship between noumenon and phenomena is established. That is, since the Dharmadhātu emerges from Suchness, it is interpreted as ultimately non-different from Suchness. Therefore, while Ātman and Suchness may share similarities in referring to an immutable aspect inherent in individuals, the concept of Brahman, signifying 'power' and serving as the principle and source of the world's creation, thus embodying absoluteness, is distinctly different from the concept of the Dharmadhātu, which encompasses the totality of phenomena revealed through the functions of Suchness. Moreover, the Ālaya-vijñāna or One Mind involves both the attributes of wisdom and ignorance, whereas Brahman transcends these two attributes. These characteristics of Brahman later manifest in the Hindu tradition as the concept of a supreme deity that creates and controls the universe.⁵⁴³

Also, it is crucial to understand that Tathāgatagarbha encompasses more than just an ontological basis; it fundamentally underpins epistemological and ethical dimensions. Phenomena *exist to* an individual precisely because they are perceived and conceived in their specific manifestations, determining their existential presence through subjective experience. The correct apprehension of phenomena depends on the Attributes of wisdom and virtues inherent in Suchness, as elucidated in the *Qixin lun*. This intricate framework suggests that Tathāgatagarbha must be considered an *a priori* prerequisite for realizing the true nature of phenomena. Hence, equating Tathāgatagarbha with Ātman disregards its multifaceted dimensions, including the vital

⁵⁴³ In relation to this point, *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* states as follows: "Ignorance leads to worldly ties and wisdom leads to immortality. Both ignorance and wisdom are created by the brahman, but the brahman himself is neither wisdom nor ignorance. He controls everything. He controls all forms and their origins. At the time of creation, he instilled his wisdom in Hiranyagarbha, the creator. But he is himself neither wisdom nor ignorance." Bibek Debroy and Dipavali Debroy, *The Upanishads* (Delhi: Books For All, 2020), 84.

soteriological role.

In this context, Matsumoto himself appears to agree. In his recent work, he acknowledges that the ‘inherent Buddha-nature interpretation (佛性內在論)’ is not entirely synonymous with the Ātman doctrine of Hinduism. He argues that, although there is a theoretical resemblance to Ātman, "Buddhist characteristics" are also present in this interpretation. Matsumoto elucidates these characteristics through the 'teaching of Seven Buddhas (七佛通戒)' cited in the previous chapter of this research. According to him, the quintessential teaching in Buddhism encourages the practice of good deeds and the avoidance of evil;⁵⁴⁴ distinguishing between good and evil and the ensuing practice is argued to be central to Buddhism. Indeed, the concept of tathāgatagarbha, as it evolves within the Huayan tradition, develops in close interrelation with the major theoretical and practical elements of Buddhism within its distinct context. For example, in Tathāgatagarbha thought, Tathāgatagarbha or Suchness is not only the source of faith in the Dharma but also a source for Buddhist moral feelings like great compassion and practices like the Six Pāramitās. Moreover, it not only signifies the seal of Nirvāṇa itself but also serves as an active force leading practitioners towards Nirvāṇa. Furthermore, in the Huayan tradition, complete enlightenment is achieved when wisdom based on Suchness and altruistic practice perfectly resonate with each other. The way the notion of the True Self unfolds within the tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions is thoroughly interwoven with a Buddhist soteriological context, making the concept of Suchness distinct and non-equivalent to Ātman or any other Indian tradition.

To conclude the discussion on the similarities with the Ātman doctrine and the issues

⁵⁴⁴ Shiro Matsumoto, “佛性と靈性 (Buddha-nature and Spirituality),” *Korean Journal of Indian Buddhism* (印度哲學) 41 (2014): 32-33.

surrounding the Critical Buddhism movement, it is evident that the critiques put forth by Critical Buddhists encompass several significant problems. Beyond the issues previously addressed, a notable deficiency is their failure to substantiate the assertion that only the teachings of non-self and dependent origination constitute authentic Buddhism, seemingly neglecting Buddhism's historical and cultural evolution. Considering that Buddhism in East Asia has long transcended mere religious confines to become a substantial cultural phenomenon, this oversight is particularly regrettable.⁵⁴⁵ Additionally, the inclination towards subjective interpretations of key concepts such as *icchantikas* (一闍提) or *Dharmadhātu* raises further concerns. Nonetheless, the contributions of Critical Buddhists are invaluable, initiating discussions that have led to a broader reevaluation of Buddhism, extending even to social and ethical considerations.

3.4.4.4 The Expedient Means Argument of Tathāgatagarbha

Although the resonance sparked by the Critical Buddhism movement appears to have diminished recently, critics of Tathāgatagarbha thought still exert significant influence. Contemporary critiques often adopt a more moderate stance than the outright rejection seen in Critical Buddhism; they recognize Tathāgatagarbha as part of the historical Buddhist discourse, yet reinterpret its status as an expedient means (方便)—the Buddha's skillful means, thereby integrating it into the legitimate teaching of Buddhism.⁵⁴⁶ This interpretative trend could be

⁵⁴⁵ Peter N. Gregory, "Is Critical Buddhism Really Critical?," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 293-297.

⁵⁴⁶ An example of the perspective that places the importance of Huayan metaphysics on expedient value can be referenced as follows: Thomas Cleary, *Entry Into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism*

broadly termed as the argument for Tathāgatagarbha as Expedient Means (如來藏方便設).⁵⁴⁷ A prominent scholar representing this viewpoint is Paul Williams.⁵⁴⁸ This perspective may facilitate a consistent interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha thought without deviating significantly from the non-self perspective maintained by the Prajñāpāramitā tradition or the earlier traditions of Buddhism. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of Tathāgatagarbha proponents, this approach may not constitute a thorough understanding of the Tathāgatagarbha framework. This is because such a perspective could be considered tantamount to disregarding the intricate structure that the notion of Tathāgatagarbha, especially in its later developments, is believed to have with Buddhist faith, doctrine, and practice due to the inherent power vested in the Tathāgatagarbha. Consequently, such a view might inadequately describe the practice and enlightenment process within Tathāgatagarbha thought, simplifying it to merely an expedient means. Reflecting on the *Qixin lun*'s portrayal of Tathāgatagarbha, where Suchness is endowed with universal moral attributes and functions critical for enlightenment and practice, it becomes evident that this conceptual framework does not seamlessly merge with the non-self teaching of Early Buddhism.

When striving for a rigorous understanding of Tathāgatagarbha thought, the primary reason the argument positing Tathāgatagarbha as merely an expedient means fails to be persuasive is due to its incompatibility with how 'expedient teachings' are defined and handled

(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 1-2.

⁵⁴⁷ For a brief introduction to two interpretations of approaching Tathāgatagarbha thought through the concept of expedient means, see the following reference: Jikidō Takasaki, "The Tathāgatagarbha Theory Reconsidered: Reflections on Some Recent Issues in Japanese Buddhist Studies," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27 (2000): 81-82.

⁵⁴⁸ In terms of Paul Williams's interpretation, he positions Tathāgatagarbha thought as a skillful means for elucidating the teaching of non-self. This perspective presents a significant counterargument to the Critical Buddhism movement, which denies Tathāgatagarbha thought as a legitimate branch of Buddhism. For more detailed analysis, see the following reference: Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 104-128.

within Tathāgatagarbha thought itself. Tathāgatagarbha traditions, along with subsequent Huayan developments, clearly exhibit a tendency to deem earlier Buddhist traditions as expedient means, thereby reorienting and integrating them within the framework of Tathāgatagarbha thought. For instance, the *Qixin lun* addresses 'correcting false understandings' (對治邪執) by critiquing the perception of Tathāgatagarbha as mere emptiness, labeling it a 'false view of the True Self' (我見, *puḍgala-dṛṣṭi*). The text underlines that Tathāgatagarbha inherently possesses wisdom and limitless virtues, proposing that portraying Tathāgatagarbha as 'mere emptiness (虛空)' serves as a skillful means to dispel incorrect attachments to the notion of Suchness.⁵⁴⁹ This interpretation can be said to rearrange the traditional notion of Two Truths (二諦) around the concept of Tathāgatagarbha. This point illustrates that the scriptures and treatises dealing with Tathāgatagarbha thought and its proponents never considered the unique notion of Suchness in Tathāgatagarbha thought as merely part of expedient means, using the same logic presented by the argument for Tathāgatagarbha as expedient means.

This endeavor, as already reviewed, exemplified through the 'classification of Buddha's teachings' by Huayan masters like Fazang.⁵⁵⁰ Although Huayan masters subsumed Huayan

⁵⁴⁹ “對治邪執者，一切邪執皆依我見，若離於我則無邪執。是我見有二種。云何為二？一者、人我見，二者、法我見。人我見者，依諸凡夫說有五種。云何為五？一者、聞修多羅說如來法身畢竟寂寞猶如虛空，以不知為破著故，即謂虛空是如來性。云何對治？明虛空相是其妄法、體無不實，以對色故有，是可見相令心生滅。以一切色法本來是心，實無外色。若無色者，則無虛空之相。所謂一切境界唯心妄起故有，若心離於妄動則一切境界滅，唯一真心無所不遍。此謂如來廣大性智究竟之義，非如虛空相故。二者、聞修多羅說世間諸法畢竟體空，乃至涅槃真如之法亦畢竟空，從本已來自空離一切相。以不知為破著故，即謂真如、涅槃之性唯是其空。云何對治？明真如法身自體不空，具足無量性功德故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0579c26-0580a13.

⁵⁵⁰ When Fazang characterizes the Tathāgatagarbha tradition as expedient means, he usually does so in comparison to the Huayan tradition. For example, in the *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), all 'Three Vehicles (三乘教)' of the Mahāyāna tradition are metaphorically equated with expedient means, while the Huayan 'One Vehicle (一乘)' is depicted as a separate teaching of ultimate reality. However, considering the centrality of the

thought under the most ultimate teaching, they also positioned Tathāgatagarbha thought above the teachings of Early Buddhism, the Prajñāpāramitā, and the Yogācāra, thereby considering them as expedient means to Tathāgatagarbha thought. This not only demonstrates their sincerity towards Tathāgatagarbha thought as truth but also clearly was a political judgment towards other Buddhist traditions that were in competition at the time. However, considering these points together, it becomes evident that there remains an unresolved tension between attempts to synthesize Tathāgatagarbha thought with earlier Buddhist traditions through the concept of expedient means.

As the discussions have shown, the philosophical dilemmas associated with Tathāgatagarbha thought, despite the extensive debates and rebuttals they have prompted, still are not fully resolved. This reality partly explains the relative underdevelopment of ethical studies within the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions. Nevertheless, it remains clear that Tathāgatagarbha thought, as an important component of the Buddhist tradition, is endowed with distinctive characteristics capable of significantly influencing the trajectory of Buddhist philosophy. Particularly, its theoretical, practical, and conceptual characteristics, especially concerning contemporary ethical challenges, could be considered among its most compelling advantages.

Despite this, an undeniable point is that Tathāgatagarbha thought primarily developed within the East Asian Buddhist tradition, and its origins, at the highest estimate, should be

concept of "arising from the mind (性起)," which is based on the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, as a key doctrinal element in his overall philosophy, it would be difficult to argue that he regarded the Tathāgatagarbha tradition solely as an expedient means. See "分相門者。此則別教一乘別於三乘。如法華中宅內所指門外三車誘引諸子令得出者。是三乘教也。界外露地所授牛車是一乘教也。然此一乘三乘差別。諸聖教中略有十說。一權實差別。以三中牛車亦同羊鹿。權引諸子務令得出。是故臨門三車。俱是開方便門。四衢道中別授大白牛車。方為示真實相。" Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), T.45.1866.0477a20-27.

considered postdating the period of activity of Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna. This places it at a considerable temporal distance from the era of Śākyamuni's direct teachings (原音). Furthermore, its philosophical characteristics surrounding the concept of the self present a form that does not smoothly align with the non-self teaching central to early Buddhism. This issue of doctrinal legitimacy appears to be one reason why the importance of Tathāgatagarbha thought remains marginalized in contemporary Buddhist studies. Extreme assertions that Tathāgatagarbha thought is not Buddhist are not exclusive to the Critical Buddhism movement but are still frequently discussed within contemporary Buddhist circles.

In summary, one reason why the ethical and philosophical aspects of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought have not received sufficient attention, and research into them has been delayed, is due to the interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha thought's concept of the self being significantly different or even seemingly incompatible with that of early Buddhism. Additionally, the emergence of Tathāgatagarbha thought is hundreds of years later than the original teachings of early Buddhism, and there might have been intellectual exchanges with other Indian religious traditions in the interim. In this chapter, despite such distinctive contexts, it has been elucidated that Tathāgatagarbha thought has made endeavors to synthesize the essential premises of early Buddhism, and further, it has been revealed that the theoretical frameworks offered by the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions still present significant philosophical and ethical implications.

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Chapter 4: The Domain of Huayan Ethics: Moral Responsibility and Its Applicability to AI Ethics

4.1 Introduction: Is Huayan Teaching a Tautology? A General Misunderstanding of Huayan Philosophy

The third factor that potentially delays the development of discussions on Huayan ethics is the misunderstanding of the relationship between Tathāgatagarbha thought and Chinese Huayan thought. Specifically, there is an overemphasis on the notion that Huayan thought crucially adopts the theory of mind from Tathāgatagarbha thought. This leads to the erroneous treatment of the philosophical frameworks of both as identical. Now, it is true that Huayan philosophy, as established by Chinese Huayan masters like Fazang and Chengguan, significantly incorporated Tathāgatagarbha thought through Tathāgatagarbha texts such as the *Dasheng qixin lun* (hereafter referred to as the *Qixin lun*), and this approach lends some validity to this interpretation. However, this approach overlooks the unique philosophical and ethical implications inherent to the Huayan tradition itself, thereby preventing Huayan ethics from receiving the full attention it rightfully deserves.

Many contemporary East Asian scholars of Buddhism view the concept *xingqi* (性起) as best representing the doctrinal characteristics of the Huayan tradition. *Xingqi* refers to the ‘manifestation of phenomena arising from the fundamental nature of the mind,’ and it is a concept that is rooted in the Tathāgatagarbha notion and specifically representing the ‘dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起).’ The term *xingqi* appears widely in Huayan

texts, including the *Baowang rulai xingqi pin* (寶王如來性起品) of the sixty-fascicle *Huayan Jing* (華嚴經), in its counterpart, the *Rulai chuxian pin* (如來出現品), in the eighty-fascicle version, and in early Mahāyāna scriptures such as the *Āṅgulimālīya Sūtra* (央掘魔羅經).⁵⁵¹ Chinese Huayan patriarchs frequently employ this term in their writings, indicating its doctrinal significance.⁵⁵² Therefore, it cannot be said that modern scholars who characterize Huayan doctrine *partially* through the term *xingqi* are entirely mistaken.

However, it is important to note that merely because Tathāgatagarbha thought is embraced as a major concept in Huayan tradition, this does not justify equating Tathāgatagarbha thought with Huayan thought. This is not merely because Huayan thought historically appeared later and inherited Tathāgatagarbha thought; rather, the theory of the mind in Huayan philosophy constitutes only one part of its doctrinal characteristics, and particularly in the Huayan *fajie* (法界, *Dharmadhātu*) thought, ontological considerations have developed and have been synthesized that were not implied in Tathāgatagarbha thought.⁵⁵³ Such differences are clearly demonstrated in

⁵⁵¹ “從真實法性起，堅固不轉，無礙所持，諸佛無礙功德所生。” Buddhabhadra (佛馱跋陀羅), trans., the *Dafangguang fo Huayan jing* (大方廣佛華嚴經), T.09.0278.0495b21-23; also see, “十地菩薩亦復如是，於自身中觀察自性，起如是如是無量諸性種種異見，如來之藏如是難入。” Guṇabhadra (求那跋陀羅), trans., the *Yangjuemoluo jing* (央掘魔羅經), T.02.0120.0525b26-28.

⁵⁵² According to Kisun Kang, for Chinese Huayan commentators, the concepts of ‘Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏),’ ‘Buddha-nature (佛性),’ ‘arising from the nature of Tathāgata (如來性起),’ and ‘the manifestation of Tathāgata (如來出現)’ are all used interchangeably to refer to the notion of Tathāgatagarbha within the context of Tathāgata thought. However, he argues that historically tracing these terms reveals that ‘Tathāgatagarbha’ was the earliest expression used, found initially in the early Buddhist scriptures of the *Chengyi Ahan Jing* (增一阿含經). This was followed in sequence by the emergence of ‘Buddha-nature,’ then ‘arising from the nature of Tathāgata,’ and finally ‘the manifestation of Tathāgata.’ See, Kisun Kang, “中國佛教思想에 나타난 佛性の 변천과 如來藏의 해석 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China], *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 30-37.

⁵⁵³ Youngyou Jin categorizes the concept of *fajie* (法界, *Dharmadhātu*) used in the Huayan tradition into four types:

concepts such as the ‘Fourfold perspectives on Dharmadhātu (四法界觀)’ and the ‘dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu (法界緣起), which are my main focus in the below analysis.⁵⁵⁴

Understanding the relationship between mind and phenomena, and the concept of dependent origination, are essential in highlighting the moral implications and differences between Huayan and Tathāgatagarbha thoughts. Based on such understanding, Huayan patriarchs have often positioned Huayan above Tathāgatagarbha thought in their *panjiao* (判教) theories, considering it as the ultimate teaching.⁵⁵⁵ Such a distinction in interpretative importance would not be possible

1) The Dharma nature that persists beyond the constraints of time and space. 2) The entry of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (普賢菩薩) into the realm of Dharmadhātu. 3) The boundlessly interfusing and unobstructed realm. 4) The purity One Mind or the fundamental nature of the One Truth (一眞). According to this categorization, types 1 and 4 correspond with the traditional Tathāgatagarbha thought, while types 2 and 3 deviate from the implied meanings of Tathāgatagarbha within that thought. See, Youngyou Jin, “華嚴教學의 法界義의 고찰 [A Study of the Meaning of Dharmadhātu in Huayan Buddhism],” *Journal of the Faculty of Joong-Ang Sangha University* 7 (Gimpo: Joong-Ang Sangha University, 1998): 120. Cited in Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 446.

⁵⁵⁴ The doctrinal apex of the Chinese Huayan tradition can arguably be identified in the explicitly established "Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu" by Chengguan. This concept reaches its completion by extending the ontological relationship between phenomena (事) and ultimate truth (理) expressed as ‘non-obstruction between noumenon and phenomena (理事無碍)’ to include ‘non-obstruction among phenomena themselves (事事無礙).’ As this paper will analyze, while such framework of the Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu can already be found in the treatises of Fazang, it appears less explicitly articulated in the works of Zhiyan, the second patriarch of Huayan. In fact, when explaining some important Huayan notions such as the Ten Profound Gates (十玄門), Zhiyan primarily focuses on elucidating the relationship between the ultimate truth and phenomena, central to Tathāgatagarbha thought. For instance, in his later work, the *Huayan jing gongmu zhang* (華嚴孔目記), Zhiyan introduces the concept of *xingqi* as the epitome of the Huayan One Vehicle (華嚴一乘). While Fazang largely adopts this perspective, he does not stop there but advances his philosophical framework by integrating the Perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena, into his core teachings. For further details on Zhiyan’s descriptions in the *Huayan jing gongmu zhang*, see: “性起者。明一乘法界。緣起之際。本來究竟。離於修造。何以故。以離相故。起在大解大行。離分別菩提心中。名為起也。由是緣起性故。說為起。起即不起。不起者是性起。廣如經文。此義是一乘。” Zhiyan (智儼), the *Huayan jing neizhangdeng za kongmu* (華嚴經內章門等雜孔目), T.45.1870.0580c05-09.

⁵⁵⁵ The attempt to distinguish the doctrine of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu, which encapsulates the understanding of causality in Huayan Buddhism, from the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, and to emphasize the doctrinal superiority of the former, was already evident in the works of Zhiyan. However, as Soonil Chung points out, the concept of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu as understood by Zhiyan differs from that established in the later Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu by subsequent Huayan masters, potentially leading to confusion. Zhiyan’s interpretation of this dependent origination was more an arrangement of the prevalent ideas centered around the *Qixin lun* concerning dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha during his era. See,

if the two thoughts were regarded as equivalent.

Equating Huayan philosophy with Tathāgatagarbha thought is often considered general knowledge within the field of Buddhist studies, despite its inaccuracies. This is why it seldom appears as the central thesis of any research. However, it is not difficult to encounter instances where such misunderstandings subtly manifest in existing studies on Huayan. For example, JeeLoo Liu states in her introductory study on Huayan philosophy:

Hua-yan Buddhism does not assign more reality to the existence of individual minds than to the physical world. The unreal mundane world is not simply the experiential world external to us; we are part of it as well. In other words, our sensation, perception, and consciousness are all part of this unreal phenomenal world; furthermore, our self-identity and even our very existence are not real. ... In addition to asserting the unreality of multiple individual minds, Hua-yan's theory of mind also assumes that there is one true Mind. This one Mind creates all other minds. ... This one Mind is eternal, absolute, and all-embracing. ... Under the multiple minds' deluded discriminations are generated birth and death as well as all sorts of forms, movements, and changes. Multiple minds can be identified with the One True Mind as long as they can be free from delusions and discriminations. ... As a result, all phenomenal worlds will be reduced to the one noumenon. This "returning to the One Mind" and "reducing all appearances to the One Noumenon" is the ultimate teaching of the Hua-yan School.⁵⁵⁶

In the cited text, JeeLoo Liu does not provide a clear definition of "individual minds" and the "One True Mind." However, the way she associates "individual minds" with concepts such as "existence" and "deluded discriminations," while describing the "One True Mind" with terms like "eternal, absolute, and all-embracing," suggests that she views these two types of mind from the perspective of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha. Additionally, the descriptions that the "One True Mind" gives rise to all other minds further clarify her perspective. Utilizing

Soonil Cung, "지엄의 법계연기설에서 염정 수용의 단면 [Purity and defilement of Chih Yen's Dharma dāthupaṭṭicasamuppāda]," *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 28 (2004): 235-238.

⁵⁵⁶ JeeLoo Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 257-258.

expressions from the previous chapter of this study, the “individual minds” can be said to represent the ‘empirical self,’ while the “One True Mind” represents the ‘True Self.’ Her interpretation appears to base the fundamental Huayan concept of “one is all, many is one (一即一切多即一)” on the Tathāgatagarbha notion, defining it as Huayan’s “ultimate teaching.” However, this interpretation does not reveal an understanding of the intricate causal relationships among phenomena themselves, a central idea in Huayan tradition known as non-obstruction among phenomena (事事無礙).⁵⁵⁷ Therefore, while JeeLoo Liu’s characterization of Huayan’s ultimate teaching cannot be said to be completely incorrect, it is also difficult to consider it a fully accurate representation of Huayan tradition.⁵⁵⁸

The primary objective of this chapter is to clarify misunderstandings that view Chinese

⁵⁵⁷ Chengguan provides the following definitions for the concepts of *li* (理, noumenon) and *shi* (事, phenomena) in the Huayan context: "The characteristics of form, mind, and others are referred to as phenomena (事). The emptiness and tranquility of essence or nature are referred to as noumenon (理). (色心等相謂之事也。體性空寂謂之理也。)" Chengguan (澄觀), the *Huayan jing xingyuan pin shu* (華嚴經行願品疏), X.05.0227.0062a09.

⁵⁵⁸ As another example of viewing the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan as simply identical philosophy, Kisun Kang equates the concept of Buddha-nature or Tathāgatagarbha from Tathāgatagarbha thought with the concepts of *xingqi* and the manifestation of Tathāgata (如來出現) in the Huayan tradition. He also claims that each character of the formal title of the *Huayan jing*, "*Dafanguang fo huayan jing*," describes characteristics of Buddha-nature from Tathāgatagarbha thought. While it is difficult to outright refute his interpretation of the *xingqi* concept or the title of the *Huayan jing*, it can be said that the evidence he presents is not sufficient to equate Tathāgatagarbha thought with Huayan thought completely. Although the *xingqi* concept in Huayan is indeed based on Tathāgatagarbha thought, this fact does not necessarily mean that Huayan tradition is composed solely of Tathāgatagarbha thought. Moreover, while it is true that many interpretations of the *Huayan jing* assume that it includes Tathāgatagarbha thought, equating Chinese Huayan philosophy with the *Huayan jing* alone is also an overstretch. For more on Kisun Kang’s claims, see: Kisun Kang, “中國佛教思想에 나타난 佛性の 변천과 如來藏의 해석 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China], *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 37-38; In the cases of Fazang and Chengguan, there is a conspicuous tendency to distinguish between the teachings of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan. However, in the case of Zongmi, the distinction between the two appears to be more ambiguous. Cheonhak Kim, in his comparative study of Fazang’s and Zongmi’s commentaries on the *Qixin lun*, points out that although Zongmi separates the *Qixin lun* and the *Huayan jing* in terms of doctrinal classification, his explanations of Huayan rely almost entirely on the *Qixin lun*’s explanations of the Tathāgatagarbha. Accordingly, Kim evaluates that Zongmi’s emphasis on the One Mind leaves room for the *Qixin lun* and the *Huayan jing* to be interpreted as having equivalent status. For Cheonhak Kim’s study, see the following: Cheonhak Kim, “法藏과 宗密 『起信論疏』의 流傳과 思想의 相違 [A Study on the circulation of Fazang’s *Qishinlunshu* and its Ideological Differences from Zongmi’s],” *Journal of Bojo Jinul and Buddhism* 51 (2018).

Huayan thought as a tautology of Tathāgatagarbha thought by distinguishing the philosophical and ethical characteristics of Huayan thought from those of Tathāgatagarbha. Before delving into this task, there are two important points to consider. First, although Chinese Huayan masters used the *Huayan jing* as their primary source, it is generally accepted that the doctrinal framework of these masters should be distinguished from that of the *Huayan jing*. Therefore, while this chapter will refer to passages from the *Huayan jing* as necessary, it will primarily consider the works of figures such as Fazang and Chengguan as the main references for discussion development. Another notable point is that the differences between Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought are not limited to their understanding of ontological causality. While the perspectives on causality are considered the most crucial aspect in illustrating the differences between these two traditions through the Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu, the moral implications associated with such causality are also important. One regrettable aspect, however, is that neither Tathāgatagarbha nor Huayan thought explicitly uses terms that could be translated into concepts commonly utilized in today's ethical discussions. Therefore, it can be said that there is a need for the intervention of modern ethical concepts to draw out and compare the moral implications implicitly embedded in each of these traditions. In this chapter, the notion of 'moral responsibility' will be used to carry out the comparative analysis of the two traditions. Correspondingly, this chapter first examines how the concept of moral responsibility can be applied to understanding Chinese Buddhist philosophy before analyzing the ethical implications of Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought.

Another objective of this chapter is to explore whether the ethical framework of Huayan Buddhism extends beyond merely being a historical document, to being applicable to today's ethical issues—essentially investigating the applied ethical potential of Huayan thought. As will

be examined in the fourth section, the notion of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu, which characterizes Huayan's approach to causality, conceptualizes causal relationships among phenomena as *abstract* and *interdependent definitions*. This conception of causality does not necessarily presuppose specific actions, cognitions, or attitudes required for engaging with others, positioning it as one of the most extensive and complex theories of causality found in Buddhist philosophy. Such a perspective, when compared to traditional action-centered ethical viewpoints or issues that focus on the moral judgments and actions of a single agent, can seem overly abstract and may have been challenging to translate into productive discourse. However, since the 2010s, and particularly in recent years, as artificial intelligence technology—especially generative AI models and algorithmic technologies that depend on extensive user interaction and mass data usage—has profoundly penetrated all aspects of human life, the breadth and complexity of Huayan causality may offer valuable insights for addressing these advancements. Therefore, as part of exploring the potential for applying Huayan ethics to contemporary ethical issues, this chapter concludes by laying the groundwork on how Huayan ethics can be utilized for the burgeoning field of AI ethics.

4.2 The Problem of Moral Responsibility Implicit in Buddhism

From a general perspective, the concept of 'moral responsibility' typically becomes applicable when an agent's actions lead to blameworthy consequences. In everyday and philosophical discourse, the term 'responsibility' encompasses job duties, obligations, roles, and attributability. It also includes broader, relatively value-neutral concepts of accountability, which

in some contexts may simply relate to causal connections.⁵⁵⁹ However, 'moral responsibility' is distinct because it is always subject to moral response or assessment.⁵⁶⁰ In other words, the core function of the concept of moral responsibility is to identify the moral wrongdoer and justly assign the burden of resolving the issue to them. Although such a general definition may still seem vague or abstract, providing a precise philosophical definition can be challenging. This difficulty arises because there are various interpretations and assertions regarding the causes or conditions that evoke moral responsibility, the criteria for selecting subjects eligible for the ascription of responsibility, the presence of intentionality in actions and outcomes, and the awareness of a predicted/predictable connection between actions and outcomes. For example, while it might seem that free will and committing specific actions are necessary conditions for constituting moral responsibility, arguments for a broader notion of responsibility, such as 'collective responsibility,' also exist, which do not necessarily regard such conditions as essential. Therefore, defining the philosophical meaning of moral responsibility is in itself one of the significant issues associated with this concept.⁵⁶¹

Despite the variety of discussions surrounding moral responsibility, a commonly accepted notion in philosophical circles is the presupposition of causality between agency and outcomes, or between moral character and effects. It is on this basis that moral judgments are made regarding the former based on the latter. Through this connection, Buddhist philosophy,

⁵⁵⁹ In fact, the concept of responsibility can be defined in many different ways. For example, Joel Feinberg categorizes types of responsibility into a fivefold framework, which includes aspects related to morality. See, Joel Feinberg, *Doing & Deserving* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 129-139; For a comprehensive overview of the various perspectives and debates surrounding moral responsibility, see Matthew Talbert, "Moral Responsibility," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman, ed., URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/moral-responsibility/>.

⁵⁶⁰ Andrew Eshleman, "Moral Responsibility," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/moral-responsibility/>.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

which considers causality as manifested through dependent origination (緣起, *pratītyasamutpāda*) as a fundamental doctrinal element, finds a common ground with the concept of moral responsibility. When the ideas of moral responsibility and causality are combined, a critical issue that arises is the agent's 'power of self-government,' or autonomy.⁵⁶² However, engaging in the longstanding academic debate between autonomy and causal determinism is not the objective of this study. This is because the issues surrounding these two concepts are rarely mentioned explicitly in the extensive Buddhist texts to the extent that no corresponding terms are found. Nevertheless, the stance of Buddhism, which fundamentally regards soteriology based on practice as its underlying principles, appears quite clear: Buddhist philosophy of dependent origination fundamentally follows causal determinism but always leaves room for free will. This implies an acceptance of the compatibility between free will and causal determinism. This feature has an inevitable aspect because, without it, the soteriological ideals emphasizing the pursuit of enlightenment based on the practitioner's choice and will would lose their validity. Therefore, practitioners must be able to effect change in the cycle of *karma* through their will and choice, even if it does not represent a perfect level of free will, presupposing a corresponding change in outcomes. When such a practitioner, having understood the principles of *karma*, manages to avoid actions that lead to adverse outcomes, it can be said that they have attained 'Right View (正見, *samyag-drṣṭi*).'⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility," *Philosophical Topics* 24 (1996): 227-228; In this paper, Watson's main argument is that a comprehensive understanding of responsibility must consider both its aretaic and accountability aspects. The aretaic aspect focuses on how actions express an individual's moral character and values, while the accountability aspect deals with the societal and moral frameworks that determine when it is appropriate to hold someone responsible for their actions. The two facets of responsibility he presents share significant common ground with the concept of moral responsibility derived from Huayan philosophy, which will be explored in this chapter.

⁵⁶³ Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, *Good, Evil, and Beyond: Karma in the Buddha's Teaching*, trans. Bruce Evans (Sydney: Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., 1997), 97-100.

Like other Buddhist traditions, the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions engage with notions of moral responsibility through the principles of ‘dependent origination’ and ‘self-benefit and benefiting others (自利利他).’ Initially, the principle of dependent origination commonly understood in Buddhism posits that all phenomena arise based on causes and conditions, and that no phenomena exist independently. This insight underpins the causal laws embedded within dependent origination, meaning that every action (業, *karma*) necessarily results in consequences that match its ‘practical quality’; thus, scenarios where one falls further into delusion through proper practice or attains nirvāṇa through attachment are impossible under any circumstances.⁵⁶⁴ Similarly, within the context of soteriological practice, Buddhist causal law presupposes that individuals can determine the effects of their actions on their present and future experiences. Such a presupposition is essential to formulate the logical conditions for the voluntary choices aimed at removing or avoiding mental defilements and progressing toward nirvāṇa, and for the actual achievement of these goals through repeated practice. Furthermore, this presupposition implies that from a Buddhist perspective, the evaluation of an individual’s choices and actions must always be understood within a broad context of causality. While Buddhism does not explicitly promote a concept of ‘free will’ comparable to those found in Western philosophy, the notion of ‘intentionality (意),’ which is pivotal in the practice of precepts and meditation, indeed incorporates an element of free will in the sense that we can make morally responsible

⁵⁶⁴ In Buddhist terminology, ‘karma (業)’ refers to actions that inevitably bring corresponding results, broadly considered to be executed through the three modalities of body, speech, and mind (三業). Generally, from the perspective of practice, karma that leads to pleasurable outcomes is termed ‘good’ (善) and is deemed essential for achieving nirvāṇa, the ultimate good. This concept of karma is not only a cornerstone of early Upaniṣad traditions but also frequently appears as a core element of the theory of dependent origination in Nikāyas and Āgamas. For a brief overview of Buddhist theory of karma, refer to the following: Hiraoka Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, trans. Paul Groner (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 2007), 185-196.

choices.⁵⁶⁵ That is, sentient beings have the choice to either overcome their past actions and move towards nirvāṇa or remain entangled in them and continue the cycle of rebirth.

The fundamental notion of dependent origination provides a framework that is quite similar to the reasoning involved in assigning moral responsibility to individuals. Moral responsibility essentially means that an individual or a group is accountable for the consequences brought about by their actions or character. Consequently, this notion inherently presupposes an 'explainable' causality between certain qualities or actions and their outcomes. Although it may be contentious, the cultivation of such qualities or the commitment to such actions can be expected to be determined by the agent's free will or intention, allowing them to be subjects of moral judgment. Furthermore, the concept of moral responsibility is linked to the agent's ability to predict or recognize the outcomes of their intentions and actions, and to adjust their future behavior accordingly. From these characteristics of moral responsibility, it can be argued that when a practitioner anticipates the effects his actions can bring about, reflects on the causes of negative outcomes, and makes corrections to pursue the path toward nirvāṇa, this process at least encompasses the practitioner's 'self-directed moral responsibility.'⁵⁶⁶

Moral responsibility in the teaching of dependent origination in Buddhism is not imposed solely on oneself. This is because 'self-benefit and benefiting others,' a common ideal

⁵⁶⁵ The presence or absence of 'intention' for a particular action or its consequences is deemed crucial in the Buddhist Vinaya tradition. For example, in the Abhidharma tradition, five conditions are identified that must be met for an act causing death to be considered morally culpable killing (殺生), and the intention to kill is one of these conditions. This implies that an act without associated intention, even if it results in the same consequences as an intentional act, can be morally evaluated differently. For an analysis of the conditions of killing in the Abhidharma tradition, refer to the following: Rupert Gettin, "Can Killing a Living Being Ever Be an Act of Compassion? The Analysis of the Act of Killing in the Abhidhamma and Pali Commentaries," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11 (2004): 171-183; Also see, Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, *Good, Evil, and Beyond: Kamma in the Buddha's Teaching*, trans. Bruce Evans (Sydney: Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., 1997), 6-9.

⁵⁶⁶ Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto asserts that the concept of 'responsibility' best represents the meaning of *karma* (Pāli: *kamma*) as it appears in the early Buddhist scriptures. See, Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, *Good, Evil, and Beyond: Kamma in the Buddha's Teaching*, trans. Bruce Evans (Sydney: Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., 1997), 9-10.

in Buddhist philosophy, is closely tied to the path of practice and the attainment of nirvāṇa. This implies that while a practitioner pursues their own attainment on the path to nirvāṇa, they must also seek the welfare of others in ways that contribute to their enlightenment. Consequently, this concept is central to Buddhist ethics and underscores the principle that an individual's actions should consider the impacts on themselves, others, and the broader community. In this context, practitioners are morally accountable not only to themselves but also to others in their actions and in the cultivation of their moral qualities. Therefore, the correct practice should include efforts to consider the impact of their actions on others and strive to enhance positive outcomes for all. In general Buddhist understanding, 'striving to enhance positive outcomes' specifically entails acts that alleviate the suffering (苦, *duḥkha*) of others.

Therefore, by philosophically linking the Buddhist notions of dependent origination and self-benefit and benefiting others with moral responsibility, we can gain a deeper understanding of the practitioner's roles and responsibilities beyond the personal level, extending to societal or panhuman dimensions. This is not merely a simplistic comparative philosophical approach that views Buddhism through the lens of Western philosophical notions; rather, it is closer to a method that allows us to more clearly recognize the fundamental purposes inherent in Buddhism's core teachings and ideals. In relation to the objectives of this section, such notions of moral responsibility can be effectively utilized to philosophically analyze and contrast the unique forms of dependent origination found in Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thought, which share some essential elements with the early Buddhist concept of dependent origination. Moreover, it is noteworthy that moral responsibility is not merely a topic of abstract philosophical debate; it has practical implications for legal systems, social policies, and individual conduct, profoundly influencing how societies define justice, rights, and ethical behavior. Its potential to extend into

the realms of moral norms and legal regulations provides a useful perspective for discussing the application of Huayan ethics to contemporary ethical issues in the latter part of this chapter.

4.3 The Moral Responsibility in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, representative of Tathāgatagarbha thought, centers on the phenomena arising from sentient beings' minds. The *Qixin lun* states:

Therefore, the three realms (三界) are illusory and false, merely constitutions of the mind. By eliminating the delusory mind, even the six sensory realms (六塵) cease to exist. What does this mean? All phenomena arise from the mind and are born from delusion. ... All boundaries of objects in the mundane world are maintained and remain in place due to the ignorance (無明) and delusion of sentient beings. Thus, all phenomena are like images in a mirror, having no substance; they are merely the mind, and are illusory. This is because when the mind arises, various phenomena appear, and when the mind ceases, these phenomena disappear.⁵⁶⁷

The term “*liuchen* (六塵, six dusts)” in the quote is a shorthand for the ‘realm of six sensory experience,’ known as *liuchen jingjie* (六塵境界), which is also referred to as *liujing* (六境, the six realms) or *liuzei* (六賊, the six thieves). This represents all objects that are perceived through the *liugen* (六根, six roots), which denote the faculties of sensory and cognitive activities in humans, essentially referring to the phenomenal world. Within Tathāgatagarbha thought, the phenomenal

⁵⁶⁷ “是故三界虛偽唯心所作，離心則無六塵境界。此義云何？以一切法皆從心起妄念而生。 ... 當知世間一切境界，皆依眾生無明妄心而得住持，是故一切法，如鏡中像無體可得，唯心虛妄。以心生則種種法生，心滅則種種法滅故。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0577b16-23.

world is considered to manifest when the originally pure mind of sentient beings is contaminated by ignorance and afflictions, leading to incorrect perceptions and understandings of objects. As such, the phenomena described in Tathāgatagarbha thought do not directly indicate the material composition of the world. Instead, what is indicated pertains to the experiential subjectivity of the practitioner, understood and perceived through their subjective experience, thus resembling a 'constituted representation.' To the practitioner, only the world as *grasped through* their subjectivity exists; the *Qixin lun* does not address the actuality of an objective world beyond this.

Therefore, within Tathāgatagarbha thought, when it is stated that phenomena manifest and cease through the functions of the mind, this does not imply an ontological creation and annihilation of such a world in a literal sense. Rather, what changes is only the modality of the world as perceived and understood by the subjective self, which dynamically shifts due to contamination. For example, to an individual filled with animosity, the world appears replete with hateful figures; however, once this animosity is relinquished, such figures cease to exist in their perceived world. The transformation in the structure of phenomena and the characteristics of entities within it are determined solely by the practitioner's subjectivity. The actual existence of 'hateful people' within the objective world is not regarded as a basis for judgment in this philosophy. In this context, the emergence of phenomena in Tathāgatagarbha thought fundamentally rests on *epistemological* genesis, as elucidated by the *Qixin lun*. This treatise clearly explains how the ignorance in the minds of sentient beings leads to contamination, thereby differentiating between the self as the perceiving subject and the world as the object. This differentiation and subsequent misguided cognitive activities misconstrue the world and

foster attachments that ultimately lead to suffering.⁵⁶⁸

The doctrinal characteristics of the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起) are well articulated in Tathāgatagarbha texts. However, it was Fazang, a prominent commentator on the *Qixin lun*, who first explicitly used the term "*rulai zang yuanqi* (如來藏緣起)" to describe this theory of causation. He refers to Tathāgatagarbha thought using this term in works like the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記) and the *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), incorporating it into his doctrinal classification system (判教) using terms such as the “Final Teaching (終教)” and the “Sect of the Dependent Origination based on Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起宗).⁵⁶⁹ Following Fazang, Chengguan, the fourth Huayan patriarch, explicitly defined the Huayan framework of causation using the term "*si fajie guan* (四法界觀)," the Fourfold perspectives on Dharmadhātu.⁵⁷⁰ This reestablished the idea of causation in Tathāgatagarbha

⁵⁶⁸ “復次，依不覺故生三種相，與彼不覺相應不離。云何為三？一者、無明業相。以依不覺故心動，說名為業；覺則不動。動則有苦，果不離因故。二者、能見相。以依動故能見；不動則無見。三者、境界相。以依能見故境界妄現；離見則無境界。以有境界緣故，復生六種相。云何為六？一者、智相。依於境界，心起分別愛與不愛故。二者相續相。依於智故生其苦樂，覺心起念相應不斷故。三者、執取相。依於相續緣念境界，住持苦樂，心起著故。四者、計名字相。依於妄執，分別假名言相故。五者、起業相。依於名字，尋名取著，造種種業故。六者、業繫苦相。以依業受果不自在故。當知無明能生一切染法，以一切染法皆是不覺相故。” Ibid., T.32.1666.0577a07-21.

⁵⁶⁹ “若約終教竝是如來藏緣起。舉體即如。具恒沙德。乃是眾生故。不增不減經云。眾生即法身法身即眾生。眾生法身義一名異。解云此宗約理眾生即是佛。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記), T.35.1733.0413c01-05; also, see: “四如來藏緣起宗。即楞伽密嚴等經。起信實性等論所說是也。” Fazang (法藏), the *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* (大乘起信論義記), T.44.1846.0243b27-28.

⁵⁷⁰ The translation of the Fourfold perspectives on Dharmadhātu into English seems to vary across different contemporary research. For instance, Thomé H. Fang translates it as follows: 1) *shi fajie* (事法界): "the differential Realms of Events." 2) *li fajie* (理法界): "the integrative Realm of Reason." 3) *lishi wuai fajie* (理事無碍法界): "the interpenetrative Realm of Reason and Events." 4) *shishi wuai fajie* (事事無碍法界): "the interlacing Realm of all Events." See, Thomé H. Fang, "The World and the Individual in Chinese Metaphysics," in *The Status of the Individual in East and West*, ed. C. A. Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 40-41; Fang's translation of terms from the Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu seems insufficient to capturing the

thought as "*lishi wuai guan* (理事無礙觀)," the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena, within his theoretical framework of Huayan teachings.⁵⁷¹

Although Fazang did not provide as explicit terminological definitions as Chengguan, his understanding of the conceptual differences between ‘the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena’ and ‘the Perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena,’ as well as his view of the latter as the essence of Huayan causality, is evident. For example, his writings in *Huayan wujiao zhang* (華嚴五教章) focus on describing ‘Six Aspects of Perfect Interpenetration (六相圓融),’ which concentrates on the causal relationships between existences within phenomena, that is, the Perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena. In contrast, in his work the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探顯記), the commentary on the chapter

philosophical meanings encapsulated within this framework. For instance, he uses the word "event" to translate *shi* (事), which in a phenomenological context might focus on the experience of events and how they manifest in human consciousness. According to this interpretation, an event is not merely a factual occurrence but also involves the subjective impact it has on individuals and societies. Although this translation may accurately capture the meaning of *shi* from the perspective of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, it fails to fully encompass the Huayan concept of *shi* as an entity constituting the Dharmadhātu in an ontological sense.

Moreover, regarding the concept of *li* (理), Fang describes it as "the wondrous function deeply rooted in Bhūta-tathatā and has its efficacy anytime, anywhere in virtue of the omnipresence of the Buddha." This interpretation incorrectly represents the Tathāgatagarbha notion of *li*. If *li* is understood as referring to the universality of Tathāgatagarbha and its universal attributes, translating it simply as "function" is misleading because this term indicates the 'manifestation into phenomena,' which implies particularity. In contrast, Thomas Cleary translates *li* and *shi* as "noumenon" and "phenomena," respectively. Gyootag Shin also suggests translating *li* as 'the fundamental realm beyond empirical cognition (本體界)' and *shi* as 'the realm of phenomena (現象界)', aligning with what Cleary implies. My translation of these two terms follows their interpretations. See, Thomas Cleary, *Entry Into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 24-42; Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 450.

⁵⁷¹ Jongho Lee, *澄觀의 華嚴 三聖圓融觀 研究* [A Study on the Cheng guan's view point of Huaecum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 87; for the original text describing Chengguan's definition of the Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu in the *Huayan Fajie Xuanjing* (華嚴法界玄鏡), refer to the following: “總以緣起法界不思議為宗故。然法界之相要唯有三。然總具四種。一事法界。二理法界。三理事無礙法界。四事事無礙法界。今是後三其事法界歷別難陳。一一事相。皆可成觀故略不明。總為三觀所依體。” Chengguan (澄觀), the *Huayan fajie xuanjing* (華嚴法界玄鏡), T.45.1883.0672c11-15.

of *Baowang rulai xingqi pin* (寶王如來性起品) in the 60-fascicle version of the *Huayan jing*, Fazang emphasizes the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena illustrating Tathāgatagarbha thought. Like other Huayan masters, Fazang often uses the term 'arising from the nature of mind (性起)' as an alternative expression to represent the causality in Tathāgatagarbha thought. In the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji*, Fazang describes this term as follows:

It is called 'nature (性),' which is not to be altered (不改), and the manifestation of its functioning is called 'arising (起).' This precisely gives rise to the Tathāgata's nature. Moreover, truth is called 'thusness (如)' and 'nature,' and the manifestation of its function is called 'arising' and 'coming (來)'; hence, the Tathāgata (如來) becomes the 'arising from the nature of mind (性起).'⁵⁷²

Just as when rings are made from gold, the rings are illusory, and the gold is real, only the forms arisen from the gold can be conceived and seen. ... Why does such a nature give rise to function? It is because, within the Tathāgatagarbha, there are as many virtuous qualities as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River. According to the *Qixin lun*, it is said that the non-empty Buddha-nature is endowed with great wisdom and brilliance that illuminates the entire Dharma realm. ... Then, do sentient beings and afflictions all arise *based on* this nature? Yes, because (the functioning of the mind) is something that needs to be sought, also something that needs to be ceased, and something that needs to be realized. Therefore, there is nothing that does not arise from the mind.⁵⁷³

As the cited passage illustrates, Fazang's use of the metaphors 'gold' and 'the grains of sand in the Ganges River' aligns contextually with the metaphors described in the *Qixin lun* regarding the manifestation of phenomena and the inherent merits of Suchness. Furthermore, the discussions on the function of the mind also correspond with the emphases found in the *Qixin lun*. This

⁵⁷² “不改名性。顯用稱起。即如來之性起。又真理名如名性。顯用名起名來。即如來為性起。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記), T.35.1733.0405a11-13.

⁵⁷³ “如金作鑲等。鑲虛金實。唯是金起思之可見。... 云何理性即行耶。答以如來藏中具足恒沙性功德故。起信論中。不空真如有大智慧光明義遍照法界義等。... 問眾生及煩惱皆是性起不。答皆是。何以故。是所救故。所斷故。所知故。是故一切無非性起。” Ibid., T.35.1733.0405b05-c11.

suggests that Fazang and Chengguan's perspectives on the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena faithfully follow the implications of the One Mind teaching encapsulated in the *Qixin lun*.⁵⁷⁴ It should be noted that this is treated in conjunction with Huayan's unique Perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena, so the doctrinal explanations regarding the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena can be seen as a Huayan interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha thought.

One noteworthy point in this context is that Huayan commentators tend to understand the meaning of the mundane (世間) and supramundane (出世間), which are encompassed by One Mind, more in terms of ontological relationships rather than epistemological constitution. It is unclear whether this interpretative tendency stems from the Huayan commentators' greater focus on ontological issues or from a cautious stance against Xuanzang's (玄奘, 602-664) New Yogācāra (新唯識) trend that was prevalent in China at the time. However, the treatises of these Huayan commentators often omit detailed discussions on the transformation (轉變) of cognition and the manifestation of phenomena through this process, which were deeply explored in the *Qixin lun*. For instance, in the *Huayan jinshizi zhang* (華嚴金師子章), which Fazang is said to have explained to Empress Wu Zetian (武則天) of the Tang Dynasty, the metaphor of the golden

⁵⁷⁴ According to Kisun Kang, Fazang's understanding of 'arising from the nature of mind' can be analyzed in three stages. These stages encapsulate Fazang's analysis of the Huayan concept of Tathāgatagarbha's manifestation and align contextually with the concept of 'purification by Suchness's permeation (淨法緣起)' in the *Qixin lun*: 1) Arising from the nature of mind as cause (因性起), which means the inherent nature of *li* that humans originally possess. 2) Arising from the nature of mind as practice (行性起), which means the methods, processes, and means of practice, where learning through wise mentors (善知識) and scriptures guides progression towards enlightenment. 3) Arising from the nature of mind as effect (果性起), which indicates the result of the manifestation, achieving enlightenment and becoming like the Buddha as the outcome. See, Kisun Kang, "中國佛教思想에 나타난 佛性의 변천과 如來藏의 해석 [A Study on Shift of the Nature of Buddha as Appearing in the Buddhist Ideology in China], *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association* (哲學論叢) 91 (2018): 41.

lion is used to discuss the dependent origination between Suchness and phenomena, i.e., the Ten Profound Manifestations of Dependent Origination (十玄緣起). Yet, in his use of metaphors, Fazang focuses solely on the ontological aspects of the golden lion, without delving into the transformation of cognition or other relevant aspects.⁵⁷⁵

The moral responsibility in the Dependent Origination based on Tathāgatagarbha or the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena can be considered from two interrelated perspectives: 1) from the perspective of the causal relationships that a practitioner, as one experiential subject, has with other experiential subjects, and 2) in terms of the 'fundamental causes' that lead this experiential subject to act through the three modalities of karma (三業). Firstly, moral responsibility from the perspective of causal relationships within phenomena is particularly related to the 'aspect of mind arising and ceasing (心生滅門)' within the framework of the One Mind in the *Qixin lun*. In the constitutive process of the phenomenal world, it is crucial how the experiential subject forms causal relationships with 'others' considered to have an equivalent ontological status as oneself. As mentioned earlier, a definitive aspect of *the Qixin lun*'s explanation is that when it is stated that all mundane dharmas are constituted by Suchness, this constitutive relationship is primarily epistemological; the existences within the world generated by the sentient mind are not based on their physicality but rather on the world as it is perceived and interpreted as already existing. The way phenomena exist for the experiential

⁵⁷⁵ Fazang (法藏), the *Jinshizi zhang yunjian leijie* (金師子章雲間類解), Jingyuan (淨源), ed., T.45.1880.0663a04-0667a05; There is no record of Fazang's *Huayan jinshizi zhang* circulating as an independent document. It survives today in the form of quotations found in treatises written by Song Dynasty masters such as Jinshui Jingyuan (晉水淨源) and his teacher, Chengqian (承遷). For translations and philosophical interpretations of Fazang's *Huayan jinshizi zhang*, see Gyootag Shin, “『화엄금사자장』에 나타난 연기 사상 [Thought of *pratītyasamutpāda* (緣起思想) appeared in the *Avatamska-Golden-Lion-Chapter* (『華嚴金獅子章』)],” *The Journal of Buddhist Culture and Art* 1 (2013): 113-142.

subject is by being subjectively discriminated by that subject, and this discrimination fundamentally starts from the epistemological distinction between 'self' and 'others'. Subsequently, due to the inheritance of deluded consciousness, the existences within phenomena continuously change and exist. In other words, the world and others within it are merely *representations* of them as interpreted by sentient beings.⁵⁷⁶

In relation to the concept of moral responsibility, a philosophical challenge arising from this perspective is that the existence of 'others,' who are ontologically equal the experiential self, is not significantly considered in explaining the teaching of Dependent Origination. From the perspective of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, only the experiential self and its underlying True Self are described as subjects that are influenced by, and can influence, the causal relationships within phenomena. The importance of the world as a representation to such an experiential subject is limited to the 'motivation and background it provides,' which suggests that this world must be correctly understood through practice. Misunderstandings of the world and the practitioner's consequent erroneous actions are considered things that must be corrected, not primarily because of their substantial karmic impact on others (although this can also be an important consideration), but because they serve as the trigger for one's own delusion and the cycle of Saṃsāra. In short, the possibility that there could exist other beings ontologically equivalent to the subjective self, and how causal relationships with them should be explained, is

⁵⁷⁶ The attempt to locate the ontological basis of the phenomenal world in individual subjectivity undoubtedly constitutes a significant characteristic of Tathāgatagarbha thought. However, whether this is a unique characteristic of Tathāgatagarbha thought itself is debatable. Kyungah Choi argues that the attempt to extend the epistemology surrounding the self, defined as integrating both the subject and object of cognition, to the ontology of the phenomenal world has been present since early Buddhism. According to her, early Buddhist traditions classified the phenomenal world into categories such as the five aggregates, twelve bases (十二處), and eighteen elements of the realm (十八界) because they understood the existence of the phenomenal world in terms of consciousness (*vijñāna*), which links it to subjectivity. Considering that Tathāgatagarbha thought adopts theories of cognition and mind from Yogācāra, this argument strikes me as persuasive. See, Kyungah Choi, “자아와 개인에 대한 정의 고찰 [Some Thoughts on the Definition of Self and Person: Centered on Early Buddhism],” *Korean Journal of Indian Philosophy* (印度哲學) 28 (2010): 99.

not thoroughly considered. Therefore, the application of the concept of moral responsibility is challenging in this perspective of dependent origination. This includes responsibilities towards oneself as the suffering subject, but there is no clear place to delve into responsibilities towards others. From this viewpoint, the term used by Chengguan to describe the dependent origination in Tathāgatagarbha thought as the Perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena, that is, between 'Tathāgatagarbha and the world as representation' can be seen as a quite accurate expression that penetrates the essence of this teaching.

To illustrate this point concretely, let's consider a simple example. Imagine you come across a person lying on the street. If this person appears disheveled, you might initially perceive them as homeless and feel pity or a sense of moral responsibility as a fellow member of society. However, such perceptual judgments always entail the possibility of error; the passerby may in fact have no health or financial issues and may simply prefer to avoid social constraints and seek freedom, leading them to lie on the street. From the perspective of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, the reason such misperceptions accompany these phenomena is that our perception of reality is mostly acquired through the transformation of mind that begins with our own ignorance; in other words, the person lying on the street exists not as they are in themselves, but only as a representation subjectively interpreted by us. If it turns out that our judgment of the person as homeless was incorrect, then it raises questions about the validity of the moral responsibility based on that mistaken judgment. While feeling compassion towards others is generally not considered negative, if the person on the street is actually in a better position than the observer in terms of money, health, happiness, etc., then doubting the validity of feeling a moral obligation to help them based solely on their perceived appearance is reasonable.

Secondly, another Tathāgatagarbha perspective that can be viewed through the concept

of moral responsibility includes the reductive tracing of the fundamental causes of sentient beings' actions when they are assumed to be agents. For such analysis to be established, two premises are necessary. First, the understanding of dependent relationships in Tathāgatagarbha thought should go beyond merely epistemological relationships, presupposing the existence of others as things-in-themselves and the dependent relationships directed towards such others. Secondly, as illustrated in the *Qixin lun*, the True Self, that is, Tathāgatagarbha, must be assumed as one of the fundamental causes of actions committed by the empirical self. Regarding the former issue, although the framework of dependent origination in Tathāgatagarbha thought may not seem suitable for deriving the concept of moral responsibility, this does not mean that moral responsibility towards others is negated in Tathāgatagarbha thought. This is because the ethical framework provided by Tathāgatagarbha thought for moral judgment and practice clearly presupposes others with ontological status equivalent to that of the agent, and demands practice towards them. For example, the first of the Five Practices (五行) required in the *Qixin lun*, 'generous giving (布施),' can only be validly practiced by presupposing an ontological relationship with others. The latter issue related to the True Self also clearly meets the conditions for constituting moral responsibility. As the previous chapter has shown, Tathāgatagarbha thought provides universal conditions for the moral practice towards others through concepts of Suchness's pure Attributes (相), Functions (用), and so forth.

In relation to moral responsibility, this second perspective on the fundamental causes of actions could present philosophical challenges if it entails a degree of acceptance of causal determinism. This is related to the latter of the two premises mentioned earlier. I have previously emphasized that despite the presupposition of the intrinsic merits and functional powers of

Suchness, the practitioner's own choices and practices remain crucial in the path of enlightenment. However, this emphasis on free will or intention does not negate the potential influence of Tathāgatagarbha and the state of fundamental ignorance as direct causes of specific moral or immoral actions by the practitioner. Indeed, many contemporary scholars refer to Tathāgatagarbha thought as a doctrine of Original Enlightenment (本覺), interpreting the role of Tathāgatagarbha in enlightenment as a form of radical determinism. Thus, the existence and extent of free will within Tathāgatagarbha or the state of fundamental ignorance remain open issues. In this context, if we accept causal determinism even to a slight degree, the discussion on moral responsibility in Tathāgatagarbha thought could become more complex than expected.

From the general understanding of dependent origination, the reason a subject can bear responsibility towards others is that the subject's qualities or its actions serve as causes that produce corresponding consequences, which then affect the existences within phenomena and shape their manifestations. In such a causal framework, the ultimate subject or ultimate cause of these causal relationships is considered significant as a basis for responsibility. In Tathāgatagarbha thought, such ultimate causes are primarily explained in two ways. One is the Tathāgatagarbha as the True Self of sentient beings, and the other is the concept of fundamental ignorance that contaminates the minds of sentient beings, leading to the inheritance of erroneous perceptions. A philosophical difficulty arising from these two concepts is that both are considered universal or general, and from the practitioner's perspective, they are simply *given*. In other words, both Suchness and fundamental ignorance are presupposed to be beyond or unexplainable by the causal relationships of phenomena. Tathāgatagarbha is naturally presupposed as an *a priori* condition necessary for the establishment of cognition, and the state of fundamental ignorance, as described in the *Qixin lun*, appears *suddenly* (忽然) without a

knowable cause. Sentient beings born in a state of ignorance have never escaped this state of ignorance until they achieve the final awakening. Therefore, based on this characteristic, fundamental ignorance is also called “beginningless ignorance (無始無明).”⁵⁷⁷ A clear point here is that these two concepts are not entities with individuality within phenomena, hence they are not suitable subjects to which the concept of moral responsibility can be attached. While fundamental ignorance may lead sentient beings to commit moral wrongs, it merely represents a 'general' state of the sentient mind and is not an entity within phenomena. The concept of Tathāgatagarbha provides the fundamental basis for potential mental contamination but does not itself induce contaminated actions nor is it contaminated by conditions.

In the analysis of the previous chapter, I examined the two forms of the self presupposed in Tathāgatagarbha thought: the philosophical self (or True Self) and the empirical self. Among these, the former, despite providing a theoretical framework that could resolve the issue of the empirical self's personal identity—which perpetuates rebirth in phenomena through reincarnation—can never be considered a subject of moral responsibility. As Peter Gregory points out, the constitution of phenomena based on the philosophical self, namely Tathāgatagarbha, in the structure of One Mind in the *Qixin lun* is distinctly different from, for example, the creation by God in Christian tradition, which is considered to have been done with a specific intent.⁵⁷⁸ Furthermore, Tathāgatagarbha, borrowing the expression from the *Qixin lun*, does not receive the karmic results of phenomena and contains no experiential or individual characteristics. Based on these grounds, Tathāgatagarbha does not bear any form of moral

⁵⁷⁷ “是故一切眾生不名為覺，以從本來念念相續未曾離念故，說無始無明。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0576b29-c01.

⁵⁷⁸ Peter N. Gregory, “The Problem of Theodicy in the *Awakening of Faith*,” *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 77-78.

responsibility for the world it has manifested, and the issue of moral responsibility is only tied to the concept of the empirical self.

This, however, only gets us thus far. The problem is that the state and actions of the empirical self are somewhat influenced by Tathāgatagarbha and fundamental ignorance, making it difficult to consider their free will and decision-making authority as complete. This implies that actions based on Suchness and ignorance are somewhat beyond the sentient being's will and choices, being merely given as objective facts to the sentient being. Hence, just as the issue of moral responsibility for those who have lost mental control over themselves is a significant issue in contemporary philosophical discussions, the existence and extent of moral responsibility that a sentient being holds within the theoretical framework of the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha can certainly be a subject of philosophical debate. After all, given how sentient beings are born into a state of inherited delusion due to unknowable ignorance, how accountable can they be held for their erroneous judgments and actions? And if they are to be held morally responsible, on what principles and grounds can this be justified? For example, consider a deluded sentient being who steals another's property out of greed. The reason they steal is that they have developed greed, and the reason for their greed arises from discriminating self and other, where delusion is inherited from this discrimination. However, the discrimination of the self and other is fundamentally rooted in ignorance, and the delusion caused by ignorance arises on the basis of Tathāgatagarbha. From this perspective, the locus of moral responsibility for the wrongs committed by a sentient being shifts to some extent from the sentient beings themselves to ignorance and Tathāgatagarbha, neither of which can assume any form of responsibility for this. In short, a sentient being is born with the potential to commit theft, whether partially or entirely, naturally induced by circumstances beyond their control from the moment of birth. In

this framework, it seems difficult to clearly define the extent of moral responsibility that should be attributed to the empirical self, as it is merely part of the phenomena arising from fundamental cognitive activities. The Tathāgatagarbha scriptures and treatises do not provide theories for how to overcome these difficulties. As later Huayan commentators have illustrated, only relationships between the noumenon and phenomena arising from it are emphasized.

To conclude the discussion in this section, notice that the observation that moral responsibility among multiple moral agents is not explicitly clear in the teaching of dependent origination within Tathāgatagarbha thought does not negate the possibility or necessity of moral actions presented in this tradition. Indeed, the moral practices in the *Qixin lun* are clearly ensured through the principles of potential manifestation of wisdom and compassion based on the Ground, Attributes, and Function of Suchness. This study has examined the characteristics of the moral theory in Tathāgatagarbha thought based on the applicability of moral responsibility. This was done with the intention of comparing the differences in the structures of moral theories characterizing Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan thoughts. Furthermore, this research has presented one interpretation of whether the theory of dependent origination in Tathāgatagarbha thought is suitable for accommodating the concept of moral responsibility, but this does not mean there are no ways to draw out moral relations among sentient beings within Tathāgatagarbha thought. In fact, moral relations among sentient beings in Tathāgatagarbha thought can be viewed from various perspectives. For instance, Douglas Fox argues that when one transcends the perspective of relativity and reaches an absolute state, one realizes that the phenomenal self and others are essentially not different, and based on the perspective of absoluteness, a moral imperative towards others arises.⁵⁷⁹ In his argument, however, Fox does not provide details on 'why and

⁵⁷⁹ Douglas A. Fox, "Zen and Ethics: Dōgen's Synthesis," *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1971): 38–39.

how' multiple empirical subjects, who are essentially indistinct, can morally interact with one another. Nonetheless, considering that the concept of morality in Tathāgatagarbha thought is regarded as accompanying Tathāgatagarbha as an *a priori* element, his interpretation could be compelling enough to argue that sentient beings do bear moral responsibility towards others.

4.4 The Moral Responsibility among Beings in the Huayan Tradition

4.4.1 *Fajie yuanqi* in the Huayan Tradition and Its Philosophical Implications

As discussed in the previous section, Tathāgatagarbha thought, which spread from India to China, forms the core teachings of Huayan Buddhism through the lineage of the Southern Faction (南道派) of the Dilun School (地論宗). From the early Tathāgatagarbha scriptures like the *Rulai zang jing* (如來藏經) to the later treatise *Qixin lun*, we can furthermore observe a shift where the meaning of Tathāgatagarbha as the potential foundation of nirvāṇa becomes less significant, while its ontological and practical implications are reinforced through the ideas of dependent origination based on the notion of Tathāgatagarbha. Fashang (法上, 495–580), one of the disciples of Huiguang (慧光, 468–537), who was the founder of the Southern Faction of the Dilun School, adopted Bodhiruci's Yogācāra doctrines, presenting the early form of dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha by organizing the theories of dependent origination in this tradition as the Three Dependent Originations (三種緣集).⁵⁸⁰ Around the same time, the *Qixin lun*,

⁵⁸⁰ “緣者有為緣集無為緣集體也。既有其緣必有本實。故次辦法。法名自體真如。真如法性也。既有真實之理便有生死涅槃大用義興。以之為作。於向三無礙大智義成。” Fashang (法上), the *Shidi lun yishu* (十地論義疏),

translated by Paramārtha (眞諦, 499-569), also presented a systematic theory of dependent origination in Tathāgatagarbha thought. This synthesized Tathāgatagarbha thought in Chinese Buddhism was later embraced and further developed by the Huayan tradition.⁵⁸¹

It is widely acknowledged that the Huayan tradition's unique theory of dependent origination was established on the foundation of Dushun's *Fajie guanmen* (法界觀門).⁵⁸² Although the original text of *Fajie guanmen* is no longer extant, it is significantly cited and analyzed in Jingguan's *Huayan fajie xuanjing* (華嚴法界觀玄鏡) and Zongmi's *Zhu huayan fajie guanmen* (注華嚴法界觀門), making the existence of its original text no longer a matter of scholarly debate, regardless of the question of its true authorship.⁵⁸³ Dushun divided the Dharmadhātu into three contemplations: the Contemplation of True Emptiness (眞空觀), the Contemplation of Non-Obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena (理事無碍觀), and the Contemplation of the All-Embrace (周遍含容觀), collectively known as the Threefold Contemplations of the

T.85.2799.0764a06-10; Furthermore, Fashang (法上) also explained the Dharmadhātu by dividing it into 'the phenomenal Dharmadhātu' (事法界) and 'the true Dharmadhātu' (眞實法界) in his treatise. See, Jongho Lee, *澄觀의 華嚴 三聖圖融觀 研究* [A Study on the Cheng guan's view point of Huaeum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 79.

⁵⁸¹ For more details on the development of Tathāgatagarbha thought in India and China, see Boram Park, “나를 바라 보는 두 시각, 여래출현과 여래장 [Two Perspectives on 'I': the Manifestation of the Tathāgata and Tathāgatagarbha],” *Critical Review for Buddhist Studies* 10 (2011): 98~110. Boram Park argues that Zhiyan and Fazang further developed the Huayan tradition's unique theory of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu by incorporating the Southern Faction of the Dilun School's interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha and emphasizing the importance of practical cultivation through Sanjiao thought (三階教), ultimately combining it with the teachings in the *Qixin lun*.

⁵⁸² There are various scholarly claims regarding whether the *Fajie guanmen* is truly authored by Dushun. For a brief overview of these debates, see the following reference: Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 444-445.

⁵⁸³ Jongho Lee, *澄觀의 華嚴 三聖圖融觀 研究* [A Study on the Cheng guan's view point of Huaeum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 76~77.

Dharmadhātu (法界三重觀).⁵⁸⁴ These three correspond to Chengguan's Fourfold perspectives on Dharmadhātu, excluding the first, which is the contemplation of phenomena.⁵⁸⁵ In other words, Dushun's Contemplation of the All-Embrace corresponds to Chengguan's Contemplation of Non-Obstruction among Phenomena. Zongmi's *Zhu huayan fajie guanmen*, which includes Dushun's *Fajie guanmen*, describes it as follows:

Third, the Contemplation of the All-Embrace (周遍含容觀). This is the contemplation of the Dharmadhātu where phenomena interpenetrate without obstruction. ... Phenomena harmonize like Suchness, and each individual phenomenon interpenetrates seamlessly as they are all identical to Suchness. On the one hand, if we consider only phenomena, they obstruct each other. [On the other hand,] if we consider only Suchness, [the phenomena] do not obstruct each other, but neither can they pervade or embrace each other. ... In other words, since all phenomena are not exactly identical to Suchness, each phenomenon retains its original characteristics while broadly embracing others. To illustrate this argument, it is like a single tiny particle that, without changing its form, can encompass the boundless Dharmadhātu. All dharmas such as *kṣetra* (刹) do not depart from the Dharmadhātu and thus appear together within a single particle.⁵⁸⁶ This example refers to one phenomenon. The previously mentioned single phenomenon contains Suchness, and since Suchness contained in all other phenomena is fundamentally the same, following this principle, [all other phenomena] also appear within a single phenomenon.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴ Jongho Lee, *澄觀の華嚴三聖圓融觀研究* [A Study on the Cheng guan's view point of Huaecum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 79. For a philosophical interpretation of Dushun's contemplation of the Dharmadhātu, see Gyootag Shin, “『法界觀門』의 ‘觀’의 機能에 관한 試論 [A Study of *Fajieguanmen*'s (法界觀門) contemplation],” *Journal of Bojo Jinul and Buddhism* 28 (2007): 6-27.

⁵⁸⁵ Chengguan also presented three types of Huayan contemplations on Dharmadhātu. However, in Chengguan's case, he combined the third and fourth contemplations in the Fourfold Perspectives on Dharmadhātu into one, referring to it as the "Unobstructed Dharmadhātu" (無障礙法界), which distinguishes his framework from that of Dushun. See, “第三明法界類別者。略有三意。一者約三法界。初句事法界。次句理法界。第三句無障礙法界。” Chengguan (澄觀), the *Dafangguangfo huayan jing suishu yanyi chu* (大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義初), T.36.1736.0002 b29-c02.

⁵⁸⁶ *Kṣetra* (刹) is transliterated as *cheduoluo* (掣多羅), *chaduoluo* (刹多羅), or *chamo* (刹摩) and translated as *tutian* (土田), *guo* (國), or *chu* (處), which means ‘realm’ or ‘land.’ In Zongmi's analogy, it appears to be used to signify the ‘totality.’

⁵⁸⁷ “周遍含容觀第三 事事無礙也。... 事如理融 一一事皆如理故融通也。謂若唯約事即彼此相礙。若唯約理。即無可相礙。亦無可遍容。... 謂諸事法與理非一故存本一事而能廣容(標宗)如一微塵其相不大而能容攝無邊法界由刹等諸法既不離法界是故俱在一塵中現 指一為例也。由上一事。含於理故。餘一切事。與所含理。體不異故。隨所含理皆於一事中現也。” Zongmi (宗密), the *Zhu Huayan fajie guanmen* (注華嚴法界觀門), T.45.1884.0689c24-690b13.

As shown in the above-cited passage, Dushun's understanding of the mutual non-obstruction of phenomena is theoretically based on the Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena, which considers the diverse manifestations in the phenomenal world to arise based on a single foundation called Suchness. In other words, the reason a single phenomenal entity can have a dependent origination relationship that mutually interpenetrates with all other coexisting phenomenal entities is that each of them manifests based on the same noumenon of Suchness. Dushun's expressions, such as the mutual inclusion of phenomenal existences or the absence of obstruction between them, essentially assert that they all have the same Suchness as their generative foundation.

Dushun's theory of dependent origination was fully embraced and further developed by Fazang into the concept of "interpenetration without obstructions" (中中無盡) in the Dharmadhātu.⁵⁸⁸ This is well exemplified by Fazang's thought on the Ten Profound Gates (十玄門), which is generally interpreted in two ways. One is the Old Ten Profound Gates (舊十玄) in the *Huayan wujiao zhang* (華嚴五教章), which he wrote succeeding Zhiyan's theory of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu, and the other is the New Ten Profound Gates (新十玄) found in the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記). Fazang's theory of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu fundamentally adhered to the Tathāgatagarbha teaching of the *Qixin lun*, as evidenced by his frequent citations from this treatise in works such as *Wangjin huanyuan huan* (妄盡還源觀). This inherited Huayan theory of dependent origination was eventually systematized

⁵⁸⁸ “由異體相入帶同體相入故有重重無盡帝網門也。由此大緣起法即無礙法界法門故有託事顯法門也。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記), T.35.1733.0125a03-04.

by Chengguan into the Fourfold Perspectives on the Dharmadhātu. According to records of Chengguan's activities, such as the *Song gaoseng zhuan* (宋高僧傳), Chengguan did not have a direct teacher-student relationship with Fazang but rather learned Huayan from Huiyuan (慧遠), a disciple of Fazang, or from Huiyuan's disciple Faxian (法銑).⁵⁸⁹ However, Chengguan took a stance of philosophical succession to Fazang by criticizing Huiyuan, who had been critical of Fazang, in his own commentary on the *Huayan jing*. It is not entirely clear whether this was the reason, but in any case, Chengguan displaced Huiyuan and was honored as the fourth patriarch of the Huayan tradition, succeeding Fazang.

As Fazang argues, the core of Huayan doctrine is the mutually inclusive relationship between the "one" and the "many" (一即一切, 一切即一).⁵⁹⁰ This relationship between the one and the many can be interpreted in two forms within the Huayan framework, and these two interpretations are interconnected. The first interpretation views the one as the single mind, which is the foundation of all manifestations, and the many as the entire phenomena that arise based on the single mind. This perspective interprets the relationship between the one and the many from the viewpoint of the Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena. The

⁵⁸⁹ For a detailed analysis of Chengguan's academic and literary activities, including his writings and other pursuits, see Jongho Lee, *澄觀の華嚴三聖圖融觀研究* [A Study on the Cheng guan's view point of Huaeum Samsungwonyung] (PhD diss., Wonkwang University, 2017), 15-26; According to Jongho Lee, Chengguan appears to have been significantly influenced not only by Huayan teachings but also by the teachings of Tiantai (天台) and Heze (荷澤). Additionally, unlike previous Huayan patriarchs, Chengguan frequently incorporated Confucian and Daoist concepts into his writings. This is believed to be due to the active public debates between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism during his time. On the other hand, some scholars, such as Sigeo Kamata (鎌田 茂雄) and Jaesung Roh, based on Chengguan's biography and activities found in works like *Tang daheshang dongzheng zhuan* (唐大和上東征傳), raise the possibility that Chengguan's writings may have actually been authored by two or even four different individuals with the same name. For an introduction to these questions and a detailed literary review and analysis of Chengguan's life, see *Ibid.*, 10-15.

⁵⁹⁰ “謂法界自在具足圓滿一即一切一切即一無礙法門。亦華嚴等是也。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記), T.35.1733.0111a24-26.

second interpretation sees the one as a single phenomenal entity or individual, and the many as the collection of all other phenomenal entities with equal ontological status. These individual entities represent sentient beings as experiential subjects. This interpretation reflects the relationality between existences from the viewpoint of the Non-obstruction among Phenomena. In this context, the expression "one is all, and all is one" can be understood to comprehensively represent these two viewpoints from the Huayan framework of mutual penetration. Hence, when this expression appears in the writings of Huayan commentators, it is essential to examine the context to clearly understand what the one and the many refer to in each instance.

Additionally, it should be noted that these two possible interpretations are elements that constitute Huayan's teachings, making it difficult to say that one perspective is more important than the other. It is true that Huayan patriarchs generally tend to equate the ultimate teaching of Huayan with the perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena. However, at least in the cases of Chengguan and Zongmi, no hierarchical weighting is given among the Threefold or Fourfold contemplations when they list them.⁵⁹¹ Considering the mutual relevance these Huayan contemplation practices have around the concept of Tathāgatagarbha, the differences in the sequence of these Dharmadhātu contemplations can be seen as a simple enumeration of a theoretical system of dependent origination viewed from various perspectives.

As previously mentioned, the conceptual framework of the Non-obstruction among Phenomena can already be seen in Dushun's *Fajie guanmen*. However, it is Fazang who can be said to have clearly defined this contemplative practice as part of the teaching of dependent origination and systematically established it as a characteristic of the Huayan philosophy of his

⁵⁹¹ Gyootag Shin, *규봉종밀과 법성교학* [Guifeng Zongmi and Dharmatā Philosophy], (Seoul: Olivegreen Publication, 2013), 454-455.

time.⁵⁹² Fazang's perspective on this Huayan dependent origination appears in several of his works. One of the works where he most meticulously explains the concept using various metaphors is the *Huayan wujiao zhang* (華嚴五教章), also known as *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章). In this work, Fazang defines Huayan's teaching as the "separate teaching of the One Vehicle (別教一乘)" and refers to its teaching of dependent origination as "the dependent origination of the One Vehicle (一乘緣起)," which indicates the dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu (法界緣起).⁵⁹³ As mentioned above, Fazang was also the first to use the term "dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起)" in his commentary on the *Qixin lun*. This indicates that Fazang already distinguished between the teachings of dependent origination in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition and the Huayan tradition and had insights into their philosophical differences. In this context, it can be said that Fazang developed the dependent origination in Tathāgatagarbha thought and systematized it into the theory of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu.⁵⁹⁴

In the *Huayan Wujiao Zhang*, Fazang's core teachings related to the principle of dependent origination can be explained through two major theories. The first is the Ten Profound Gates of Dependent Originations (十玄緣起), and the second is the Six Aspects of Perfect

⁵⁹² Yoshifumi Ueda, "The World and the Individual in Mahāyāna Buddhist Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 14, no. 2 (July 1964): 164~165.

⁵⁹³ “如此一門既具足無窮箇無盡。及相即相入等成無盡者。餘一一門中皆悉如是。各無盡無盡誠。宜如是準知。此且約現理事錢中。況彼一乘緣起無盡陀羅尼法。非謂其法祇如此也。應可去情如理思之。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), T.45.1866.0504c18-22.

⁵⁹⁴ Hongman Lee, “法藏에 있어 如來藏緣起說의 發展形態 [The Theory of Tathāgatagarbha-Causation in Chinese Hwa-ōm School : Focusing on Pōb-jang's Understanding and Development],” *Wonkwang Journal of Humanities* 1 (2000).

Interpenetration (六相圓融). The Ten Profound Gates theory explains the causal relationships in phenomena from ten different perspectives. The classification and content of these aspects show considerable similarity to those found in the *Huayan jinshizi zhang* (華嚴金獅子章). In other words, while the Ten Profound Gates theory in the *Huayan wujiao zhang* partially reveals the perspective of the mutual non-obstruction among phenomena, as seen in its "Indra's Net" section (因陀羅網境界門), it primarily focuses on the relationship between noumenon (理) and phenomena (事), that is, the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha. For example, in his explanation of the ninth out of ten sections of the Ten Profound Gates, known as "the Dharma gate where the mind transforms and manifests to achieve excellently (唯心迴轉善成門)," Fazang writes:

Ninth is 'the Dharma gate where the mind transforms and manifests to achieve excellently.' The ten meanings above indicate that this one Tathāgatagarbha alone manifests its intrinsic pure mind. ... The reason for explaining ten gates is to express the infinite, and in this way, it possesses boundlessly countless merits. All the Dharma gates of the ten meanings above are entirely the boundless and inherent functions of this mind.⁵⁹⁵

In the above quotation, Fazang emphasizes that all ten meanings of the Ten Profound Gates theory solely arise from the merits of the pure Tathāgatagarbha. The last section (托事顯法生解門) of the Ten Profound Gates serves as a general conclusion for all ten parts of the Ten Profound Gates. Therefore, the ninth explanation quoted above can be understood to represent the final content Fazang intended to present. Given Fazang's tendency to place the most important points at the end when listing explanations from various perspectives, it can be inferred that Fazang

⁵⁹⁵ “九者唯心迴轉善成門。此上諸義。唯是一如來藏。為自性清淨心轉也。... 所以說十者。欲顯無盡故。如是自在具足無窮種種德耳。此上諸義門。悉是此心自在作用。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), T.45.1866.0507a08-14.

assigns significant importance to the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha in his Ten Profound Gates of Dependent Origination theory.

One additional point worth noting is that Fazang's theory of the Ten Profound Gates in the *Huayan wujiao zhang* intermixes the perspectives of 'Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena' and 'Non-obstruction among Phenomena.' However, this does not imply that Fazang failed to clearly distinguish and understand these perspectives. This is because before he provides the detailed explanations of the Ten Profound Gates, Fazang explicitly clarifies that his theory of the Ten Profound Gates also pertains to the perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena through the numerical relationship between one (一) and ten (十). Regarding the mutual penetration (相入) relationships that exist among the entities within the Dharmadhātu due to their causal influences, Fazang explains as follows:

If there are ten numbers in the increasing sequence of whole numbers (向上數), the number one (一) is the fundamental number. What does this mean? It is because it forms the condition (緣) for dependent origination. Furthermore, the number ten (十) exists within the number one. Why is this? If the number one did not exist, the number ten could not be established. The number one has the function (of establishing numbers), which is why it is integrated within the number ten. ... The so-called number one is not the number one by its own nature (自性); it is called such because it becomes the condition for dependent origination. Therefore, the existence of the number ten within the number one means that it is the number one forming the condition (緣成). Otherwise, if it had its own nature, it would not be caused by dependent origination, and thus could not be called the number one. Similarly, the number ten does not inherently possess the nature of ten; it is called such because it becomes the condition for establishing other numbers. ... For this reason, the existence of many within the one is called the 'one of dependent origination (緣起一).'⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁶ “於中先明相入。初向上數十門。一者一是本數。何以故。緣成故。乃至十者一中十。何以故。若無一即十不成故。一即全有力故攝於十也。... 所言一者非自性一。緣成故。是故一中有十者。是緣成一。若不爾者。自性無緣起不得名一也。乃至十者皆非自性十。由緣成故。... 是故一中即具多者。方名緣起一耳。” Ibid., T.45.1866.0503b24-c13.

In the above quotation, Fazang explains the relationships among phenomena through the relationship between the numbers one and ten. Here, perhaps concerned that the number one might be mistaken for the Tathāgatagarbha in the perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena, he explicitly states that it does not refer to an inherent nature (自性). Therefore, it is clear that his theory of the Ten Profound Gates explicitly addresses the perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena. This indicates that the intermixing of these two perspectives in his explanation of the Ten Profound Gates does not imply a lack of understanding of their differences. Rather, it suggests that he considered these two principles to be fundamentally interconnected. In other words, for Fazang, the perspective of Non-obstruction between Noumenon and Phenomena was an important theoretical framework that constituted the perspective of Non-obstruction among Phenomena. Therefore, Fazang might not have felt the need to distinguish clearly between the two when explaining the Huayan teaching of dependent origination.

Fazang's explanation of the dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu is more clearly presented in the final chapter of the *Huayan wujiao zhang* through the analogy of the "house" in the discussion of the 'Six Aspects of Perfect Interpenetration.' The method of explaining the Dharmadhātu by comparing it to a house also briefly appears in Zhiyan's *Huayan yicheng shixuan men* (華嚴一乘十玄門). However, in Zhiyan's explanation, he only describes the relationship between one and many through the relationship between a pillar and a house, and most importantly, he depicts the relationship between the pillar and the house as *equation* rather than *mutual constitution*.⁵⁹⁷ In other words, he explains that the pillar can exist because the house

⁵⁹⁷ “問何但一不成十亦不成。答如柱若非舍爾時則無舍。若有舍亦有柱。即以柱即舍故有舍復有柱。” Zhiyan (智儼), the *Huayan yicheng shixuan men* (華嚴一乘十玄門), T.45.1868.0514c09-12. For an English translation of the

exists, which can be interpreted as an analogy for the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha, where the pillar represents a phenomenon and the house represents the one mind. However, Fazang's house analogy is more specific than Zhiyan's and clearly expresses that it pertains to the dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu. In this regard, Fazang explains as follows:

Question: What is the totality (總相)?

Answer: It is the house. ...

Question: If a house were constructed solely by the condition (緣) of a rafter (椽), could it still be considered a house even without roof tiles and other components?

Answer: If there are no roof tiles and other components, then it cannot be said to form (a house), because there would not even be the condition of a rafter. This does not mean that the condition of a rafter cannot form a house. ... Why? The condition of a rafter is a cause and condition (因緣), but when a house is not yet formed, there are no conditions, so there cannot be a condition (of a rafter) either. If it is called a rafter, it is ultimately when the house is fully formed. If the house is not formed, it cannot be called a rafter. ...

Question: How is it that without a single rafter, it is not a house?

Answer: It is merely a broken house (破舍) and not a whole house (好舍). Therefore, it is known that a whole house is already included in a single rafter, and hence, the rafter is equated to the house. ... Why? If the rafter is removed, the house does not exist because if there is no rafter, the house collapses, and when the house collapses, names such as plank (板) or roof tile (瓦) cannot be applied. Therefore, planks and roof tiles are equated to the rafter. ... Just as a single rafter is so, the same is true for the remaining rafters. For this reason, the principle of dependent origination where everything mutually equated to each other cannot but be established. ... All conditions such as a rafter are distinct entities, which collectively constitute the whole; if there were no distinctions among entities, the concept of totality could not be achieved.⁵⁹⁸

referenced passage, see Thomas Cleary, *Entry Into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 128.

⁵⁹⁸ “問何者是總相。答舍是。... 問若椽全自獨作舍者。未有瓦等亦應作舍。答未有瓦等時不是椽故不作。非謂是椽而不能作。... 何以故。椽是因緣。由未成舍時無因緣故。非是緣也。若是椽者其畢全成。若不全成不名為椽。... 問無一椽時豈非舍耶。答但是破舍無好舍也。故知好舍全屬一椽。既屬一椽故。知椽即是舍也。... 何以故。去却椽即無舍故。所以然者。若無椽即舍壞。舍壞故不名板瓦等。是故板瓦等即是椽也。... 一椽既爾。餘椽例然。是故一切緣起法不成則已。成則相即。... 椽等諸緣別於總故。若不別者總義不成。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), T.45.1866.0507c20-0508a24.

As can be seen from the above analogy, Fazang focuses solely on the ontological aspects when explaining the concept of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu, excluding implications related to epistemological causality. This is a significant difference from the Tathāgatagarbha or Yogācāra traditions that preceded Huayan. In the framework of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu, relationships between existences are established merely by 'how they exist.' This establishment process of such causal relationships can be broadly divided into two stages: The first is the relationship between individual subjects and the totality of the world, i.e., the Dharmadhātu.⁵⁹⁹ In Fazang's analogy, the relationship between the individual and the whole is explained through the relationship between a rafter (椽) and a house (舍). This relationship between the part and the whole is a mutually equative relationship (相即) that must *coexist*. Fazang points out that if a completed house does not exist, a rafter can no longer exist as a rafter but merely as a piece of wood. It can exist as a rafter only because the house, which includes the rafter as an essential component, exists. This mutual coexistence works both ways. A house without rafters cannot be considered a "whole" house. In Fazang's words, it is merely a "broken house" because it lacks essential components. Therefore, for a rafter and a house to exist as a rafter and a house, they must be composed in a mutually inclusive manner. This relationship aligns with Zhiyan's analogy of the house.

However, Fazang's analogy of the house takes a step further. The relationship that one building component has with the house evolves into a mutually inclusive relationship with all

⁵⁹⁹ According to Fang, understanding the world not simply as a natural reality but by transforming and associating it with ethical, aesthetic, and religious ideals is a characteristic of Chinese metaphysics that extends beyond Chinese Buddhism. His perspective implies that the Huayan theory of dependent origination may have been partially shaped by this distinctive Chinese mode of thought. See, Thomé H. Fang, "The World and the Individual in Chinese Metaphysics," in *The Status of the Individual in East and West*, ed. C. A. Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 23.

other components of the house. This aspect is a unique interpretation by Fazang that does not appear in Zhiyan's analogy of the house. Fazang mentions roof tiles and planks as other individual entities that constitute a house, just like a rafter. According to his explanation, if roof tiles or planks do not exist, it also means that the house cannot exist as a whole house. Since the house itself cannot be established as a whole house, the rafter cannot be considered a rafter that forms part of the house; it is merely a piece of wood. This mutually inclusive relationship holds true in the opposite case as well. A house without a rafter is also an incomplete house, and in that case, the planks or tiles also lose their *definition* and become mere pieces of wood or stone. Thus, the intricate causal relationships among all existences in the phenomenal world, that is, the mutually inclusive relationships, are established. An individual entity in the Dharmadhātu, through its coexistence with the Dharmadhātu as totality, has a mutually inclusive relationship with all other individual entities within the Dharmadhātu.

The constitution of this ontologically-based *abstract* causal relationship becomes clearer through Fazang's explanation of 'mutual penetration (相入).' According to Fazang, the causal relationships among existences in the Dharmadhātu have forms of 'mutual identity (相即)' and 'mutual penetration (相入).'

⁶⁰⁰ The relationship of mutual identity views the causal relationships based on the ontological perspectives of emptiness (空) and existence (有) of the entities. For example, in the above analogy, the rafter and the house do not possess their forms as fixed essences. A rafter can be a rafter because it is essentially empty but can be *defined* as a rafter based on the existence (有) of the house. This is also true for the house, which has the potentiality

⁶⁰⁰ “就異體中有二門。一相即。二相入。所以有此二門者。以諸緣起法皆有二義故。一空有義。此望自體。二力無力義。此望力用。由初義故得相即。由後義故得相入。” Fazang (法藏), the *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (華嚴一乘教義分齊章), T.45.1866.0503b06-10.

of another existence form as a "broken house."

On the other hand, the concept of mutual penetration refers to the "functional power (力用)" of composition or inclusion that existences have in relation to each other. Here, function does not refer to any specific act and its resultant impact. Rather, it refers to the conditions or qualities that one existence must possess to be *defined as itself* in relation to another existence. For instance, a rafter can be defined as a rafter and not merely a piece of wood because it has the functional power to constitute a complete house. The functional power here refers to the elements that enable a piece of wood to be defined as a rafter, such as its sturdiness, lightness, and durability. Materials that do not possess these conditions obviously cannot be defined as rafters. Therefore, the concept of mutual penetration is based on the individual characteristics of each existence. In summary, to be defined as a particular existence within the Dharmadhātu and to constitute the ideal form of the Dharmadhātu, each individual existence must possess the appropriate conditions or qualities.

Therefore, the characteristic of causal relationships in Huayan can be summarized as 'ontological mutual definition' with an 'abstract' nature. Fazang's use of the house analogy and the concepts of mutual identity (相即) and mutual penetration (相入) effectively represent the abstract nature of these causal relationships. That is, the causal relationships that one subject has with all other subjects are not formed by any specific, concrete actions. It is merely by existing as "itself" that it establishes relationships with all other subjects. Hence, for the formation of a complete whole and to build ideal relationships with all others within that whole, the way each subject exists as 'a certain subject' becomes crucially important. Moreover, no phenomenal subject can be independent or free even for a single moment within this 'abstract' web of causal

relationships.

The concept of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu significantly differs from the structures of dependent origination presented in traditional Buddhist teachings. Even the dependent origination in Tathāgatagarbha thought, which shares the same philosophical foundation, is no exception. As previously examined, the dependent origination presented in the *Qixin lun* primarily focuses on tracing the cognitive relationship between the One Mind and phenomena based on an epistemological understanding, and it does not offer a meaningful interpretation of the causal relationships among subjects within phenomena. However, Fazang shifts the focus of this dependent origination framework to the ontological relationships among phenomenal existences. The theory of Six Aspects of Perfect Interpenetration, which analytically views the reality of the Dharmadhātu from six perspectives, clarifies the uniqueness of Fazang's framework of dependent origination. Fazang's explanations of "commonality (同相)," which sees all phenomenal existences as constituting a common whole, i.e., the Dharmadhātu; "difference (異相)," which sees each phenomenon having its unique characteristics; and "constitution (成相)," which sees the integration of these distinct and unique entities forming the totality of phenomena, demonstrate his effort to distinguish the perspective of dependent origination in Dharmadhātu from the dichotomous relationship between Suchness and phenomena emphasized in the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰¹ “第三同相者。椽等諸緣和同作舍。不相違故皆名舍緣。非作餘物故名同相也。問此與總相何別耶。答總相唯望一舍說。今此同相約椽等諸緣。雖體各別成力義齊故名同相也。問若不同者有何過耶。答若不同者有斷常過也。何者。若不同者。椽等諸緣互相違背不同作舍。舍不得有故是斷也。若相違不作舍。而執有舍者。無因有舍故是常也。第四異相者。椽等諸緣隨自形類相望差別故。問若異者應不同耶。答祇由異故。所以同耳。若不異者椽既丈二。瓦亦應爾。壞本緣法故。失前齊同成舍義也。今既舍成。同名緣者當知異也。問此與別相有何異耶。答前別相者。但椽等諸緣。別於一舍故說別相。今異相者。椽等諸緣迭互相望。各各異相也。問若不異者。有何過失耶。答有斷常過。何者。若不異者。瓦

4.4.2 The Principle of *Fajie yuanqi* and Moral Responsibility

When applying the concept of moral responsibility to the Huayan theory of dependent origination, a structure of responsibility forms that is quite different from that in Tathāgatagarbha thought. As analyzed in the previous section, the dependent origination based on Tathāgatagarbha focuses on phenomena arising from Suchness, primarily emphasizing the generative relationship between the subject and phenomena as representations. In this context, the existence of others with equal ontological status as the subject possessing Suchness, or the possibility of such existence, is not deeply explored, making it challenging to apply the concept of moral responsibility. However, in the Huayan understanding of dependent origination, such epistemological relationships are no longer of primary concern. Moreover, in this context, the epistemological and ontological supremacy of Suchness in the constitution of phenomena is relatively less emphasized, and the empirical self finally emerges as a subject responsible for others with equal ontological status.

The reason why the concept of moral responsibility can be applied to the Huayan theory of dependent origination is that, as Fazang explained, the causal relationships in the Dharmadhātu are perceived as abstract mutual definition arising solely from the "existence" of any subject. It is important to note that Fazang's concept of the 'functional power (力用)' of existence is distinct from the pure 'Functions (用大)' of Suchness explained in the *Qixin lun*. This

即同椽丈二。壞本緣法不共成舍故是斷。若壞緣不成舍而執有舍者。無因有舍故是常也。第五成相者。由此諸緣舍義成故。由成舍故。椽等名緣。若不爾者二俱不成。今現得成故知成相互成之耳。問現見椽等諸緣。各住自法本不作舍。何因得有舍義成耶。答祇由椽等諸緣不作故。舍義得成。所以然者。若椽作舍去。即失本椽法故。舍義不得成。今由不作故。椽等諸緣現前故。由此現前故。舍義得成矣。又若不作舍椽等不名多緣。今既得緣名。明知定作舍。問若不成者。何過失耶。答有斷常過。何者。舍本依椽等諸緣成。今既並不作。不得有舍故。是斷也。本以緣成舍名為椽。今既不作舍故無椽是斷。若不成者舍無因有故是常也。又椽不作舍得椽名者亦是常也。” Ibid., T.45.1866.0508b07-c12.

concept refers to the conditions or qualities that enable any existence to have karmic relationships with others, characterizing the direction and nature of the karma that the existence, as an agent, holds. If one derives the concept of moral responsibility from the premise that any subject exerts karmic influence on others merely by its existence, then the concept of moral responsibility in the Huayan ethical structure, like the structure of Indra's Net, can manifest in a highly abstract and complex form.

If we interpret the ethical implications of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu through the concept of moral responsibility, they can be characterized in two main points: 1) As long as an existence is present as a subject in phenomena, it is never free from moral responsibility towards all other beings, not even for a single moment. The mere fact of existing as an empirical subject in the world changes the definition of the world itself. If we denote the subject as S and the world as W , then the world that includes this subject can be defined as $W(s)$. While the Huayan patriarchs' explanations of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu do not detail the extent to which a single subject can influence the definition of the entire world, what is clear is that the mere existence of the subject is sufficient to alter the definition of the whole world. By existing in this way within the world, all other subjects sharing this world are redefined as beings belonging to the world that integrates $W(s)$ in its definition. This definition works reciprocally as well. Therefore, a single subject exerts an abstract influence on the definition of the entire world and all beings within it, thus bearing moral responsibility for the outcomes of such influence. If liberation from the chain of causality is the ultimate goal and fundamental ideal of Buddhism, then considering only the constitutive relationships based on the One Mind, it can be interpreted as the ultimate goal of completely freeing oneself from relationships of moral responsibility.

2) If an ideal Dharmadhātu can be envisioned, then all individual subjects that constitute such a Dharmadhātu must possess the conditions or qualities that correspond to this ideal. This can be inferred from Fazang's contrast between the "whole house (好舍)" and the "broken house (破舍)" in his analogy of the house. The fact that he does not simply describe a house as a "house without a rafter," but clearly indicates that it cannot be considered a complete house due to its deficiencies, implies the assumption of an ideal and correct form of the house. When applied to individuals and the whole, it suggests the assumption of an ideal Dharmadhātu and, likewise, the assumption of ideal individuals that constitute such a Dharmadhātu. Fazang does not explicitly define what form this ideal Dharmadhātu takes. However, within the Huayan tradition, which incorporates the Tathāgatagarbha thought in understanding the relationship between the One Mind and the Dharmadhātu, it is possible to establish whether such an ideal Dharmadhātu exists, and if it does, what kind of Dharmadhātu it is. This can be confirmed through the concept of "Samādhi of Suchness (真如三昧)" analyzed in the previous chapter. According to the concept of Samādhi of Suchness explained in the *Qixin lun*, it exists in the moment of right intuition about the world, achieved when the practice of 'cessation and observation (止觀, *śamatha-vipaśyanā*)' matures. The truth observed here is the realization that the Dharmadhātu is of 'one aspect (一相),' essentially identical with Suchness.⁶⁰² This means that the nature of Suchness is the nature of the Dharmadhātu. The nature of Suchness described in the *Qixin lun* can be summarized as the concept of the Three Classifications of Greatness (三大): it is universal and equal in essence (體

⁶⁰² “久習淳熟其心得住。以心住故漸漸猛利，隨順得入真如三昧，深伏煩惱信心增長，速成不退。唯除疑惑、不信、誹謗、重罪、業障、我慢、懈怠，如是等人所不能入。復次，依如三昧故，則知法界一相。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0582a25-b01.

大), it inherently possesses immeasurable and pure merits such as wisdom and great compassion (相大), and these pure merits manifest in phenomena as the moral practices of sentient beings (用大). This represents the ideal state of the mind of sentient beings and simultaneously the ideal state of the Dharmadhātu. Specifically, the ideal Dharmadhātu is a collective of universal and equal minds of sentient beings, where the merits of wisdom and great compassion are set as the ideal principles, and these merits are practiced and realized by each individual subject. Thus, in the Huayan view of the Dharmadhātu, the ideal universal principle of the individual aligns with the ideal universal principle of the world.

The understanding of the Huayan concept of dependent origination through the lens of moral responsibility theoretically provides stronger reasoning for the moral practice of individual subjects. As analyzed in previous chapters, both the Tathāgatagarbha tradition and the Huayan tradition derive the universal basis for moral judgment and practice from the inner elements of sentient beings' minds. If altruistic actions motivated by wisdom and compassion, or the desire to achieve enlightenment, are considered practices based on the practitioner's internal motivation, then the concept of moral responsibility derived from the principle of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu can serve as an external motivation imposed on the practitioner. If a practitioner, in addition to their internal motivation 'for' enlightenment or 'by' enlightenment, is also endowed with the practical element of moral responsibility towards others, the consistent moral reasoning leading to altruistic actions for others will be stronger than when only internal motivation is at play. Therefore, this guides the practitioner towards moral perfection both internally and externally. Actions performed based on such fully developed moral qualities are assumed not only to adhere to the moral principles within the Buddhist context but also not to

produce harmful outcomes for others.

4.4.3 The Solid Domain of Huayan Ethics

By synthesizing the above discussions and those from the previous chapters, the unique ethical structure of Huayan Buddhism becomes clear. It is undeniable that the Chinese Huayan tradition has developed much of its doctrinal composition, from the theory of mind to the theory of practice, by incorporating elements from Tathāgatagarbha thought. This also means that the ethical theories derived from it share a significant structural similarity with Tathāgatagarbha thought. Therefore, if we say that the concept of "arising from the nature of mind (性起)" represents an important facet of Huayan, such an expression would be valid. The core of establishing this concept is, of course, the concept of the mind of sentient beings (衆生心) or the One Mind within the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. Although the notion of the One Mind (一心) in the Mahayana tradition carries various implications, in the later Tathāgatagarbha tradition, its most crucial characteristic is the understanding of the mind of sentient beings as the harmonization of the two aspects of Suchness (眞如) and arising and ceasing (生滅).⁶⁰³ In the Huayan tradition, these two aspects of the mind were also understood to each have their own functional power; the former (用大) refers to the manifestation of pure dharmas (淨法) through the concept of the Three Classifications of Greatness, while the latter (力用) refers to the karmic

⁶⁰³ In this dissertation, the analysis of the *Qixin lun* primarily utilizes the original text translated by Paramārtha. For the English translation of the section on the characteristics of the mind of sentient beings in this treatise, the following English version is worth consulting: Yoshito S. Hakeda, trans., *The Awakening of Faith* (Columbia University Press, 2006), 35-54.

influence that one phenomenal subject exerts on others, as evident through Fazang's explanations. Both forms of functional power play vital roles in Huayan's ethical theory. The functional power of Suchness not only symbolizes the essential moral goodness of sentient beings but also provides a consistent ethical foundation and motivational basis for practical application. On the other hand, the functional power in the latter sense, which establishes karmic relationships, serves as the basis for the complex network of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu, thereby facilitating the application of moral responsibility.

However, it is clear that the Huayan patriarchs' theory of the mind did not arise solely from the influence of the *Qixin lun*. The concepts of 'arising from the nature' and the pure nature of the mind are already found in the Huayan patriarchs' foundational scripture, the *Huayan jing*. For example, in the 80-fascicle version of the *Huayan jing*, descriptions similar to the mind theory in Tathāgatarbha thought can be found. In the 'Chapter on the Manifestation of the Tathāgata (如來出現品)' of this sutra, the characteristics of the "mind of the Tathāgata (如來心)" are described as follows:

The wisdom of the Tathāgata reaches everywhere without exception. Why is this so? There is no sentient being that does not possess the wisdom of the Tathāgata, but they fail to realize it because they are deluded and attached due to their illusions. If they were free from illusions, they would immediately attain 'all-encompassing wisdom (一切智),' 'naturally arising wisdom (自然智),' and 'unobstructed wisdom (無礙智).' ... Similarly, the wisdom of the Tathāgata is boundless and unobstructed, benefiting all sentient beings universally. Although this wisdom is inherently present within the bodies of all sentient beings, they do not know or realize it due to their deluded thoughts and attachments, and thus do not gain its benefits.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁴ “佛子！如來智慧無處不至。何以故？無一眾生而不具有如來智慧，但以妄想顛倒執著而不證得；若離妄想，一切智、自然智、無礙智則得現前。... 如來智慧亦復如是，無量無礙，普能利益一切眾生，具足在於眾生身中；但諸凡愚妄想執著，不知不覺，不得利益。” Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀), trans., the *Dafangguang fo Huayan jing* (大方廣佛華嚴經), T.10.0279.0272c04-25.

Among the above explanations of the mind of the Tathāgata, the expression that all sentient beings possess the wisdom of the Tathāgata in their minds but that it is obscured by attachments, and the explanation that if they are free from illusions, the all-encompassing wisdom within them naturally manifests, resonate with the *Qixin lun*. Specifically, the expression 'naturally arising wisdom (自然智),' which denotes the highest wisdom that manifests spontaneously, parallels the *Qixin lun*'s explanation of achieving 'naturally arising wisdom (自然業智)' by eradicating the obstructions of ignorance through the pure permeation (熏習) inherent in the Tathāgatagarbha. This process is described in the *Qixin lun* as “natural accomplishment (自然業).”⁶⁰⁵

The philosophical parallels between the *Huayan jing* and Tathāgatagarbha thought extend beyond this point. According to Yeonsug Jo, in the *Huayan jing*, the concept of “non-empty (不空)” is interpreted differently from other early Mahāyāna traditions. It is used in the sense of ‘not void’ (*asūnya*) or ‘unfailing’ (*amogha*), indicating that the nature of the mind is filled with wisdom and compassion, a notion that resonates with the concept of ‘non-empty (不空)’ in the *Qixin lun*. Based on such usage in the *Huayan jing*, he suggests that this scripture might serve as a bridge connecting the early Mahāyāna traditions in India and the Chinese Buddhist traditions that revived after the dissemination of the *Qixin lun*.⁶⁰⁶ This doctrinal similarity between the *Huayan jing* and Tathāgatagarbha thought also leads other scholars to

⁶⁰⁵ “云何熏習起淨法不斷？所謂以有真如法故能熏習無明，以熏習因緣力故，則令妄心厭生死苦、樂求涅槃。以此妄心有厭求因緣故，即熏習真如。自信己性，知心妄動無前境界，修遠離法，以如實知無前境界故，種種方便起隨順行，不取不念，乃至久遠熏習力故，無明則滅。以無明滅故心無有起，以無起故境界隨滅，以因緣俱滅故心相皆盡，名得涅槃成自然業。” Paramārtha (真諦), trans., the *Dsheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), T.32.1666.0578b06-15.

⁶⁰⁶ Yeonsug Jo, “불교 경론에 보이는 ‘不空’의 다양한 의미: 『화엄경』을 중심으로 [Diverse Meanings of “Non-Empty” Implied in Buddhist Scriptures and Treatises: with a Focus on the *Huayan jing*],” *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2021): 236-244.

cautiously hypothesize that the *Huayan jing* might have influenced the formation of Tathāgatagarbha thought. If their hypothesis is correct, it may not be so surprising that the Huayan patriarchs heavily relied on the mind theory of the *Qixin lun* in developing their philosophical system.

Furthermore, the similarities between Tathāgatagarbha thought and Huayan tradition thought can be sufficiently understood from an ethical perspective, even without tracing intellectual history. As commonly seen in the works of the Huayan patriarchs, they presented the practice and completion of moral cultivation—more precisely, the realization of saving all sentient beings—as an essential condition for enlightenment more clearly than any other tradition. This point suggests that they assumed the possibility of *universal* altruistic practice as much as they assumed the universal purpose and feasibility of achieving nirvāṇa. In other words, if the realization of enlightenment is possible for all sentient beings based on the fundamental principles of Mahayana Buddhism, then Huayan practices should also be understood as achievable for all sentient beings. Therefore, the moral principles underlying such practices must also be presented in a universal form. In this context, the concept of the Dharmatā (法性) is inevitably postulated to secure and practice morality. That is, the ontologization and metaphysicalization of Suchness is, in some respects, unavoidable, as universal principles cannot be derived from accidental empirical conditions. Consistency in moral judgment and practice can only be established through this universality.

To characterize the ethical structure of Huayan, these universal moral principles must encompass specific characteristics and implications related to morality and practice. This is necessary for them to consistently align with the objective of salvaging oneself and others and ultimately achieving enlightenment. Additionally, the implications of these principles should not

contradict the general norms indicated by traditional Buddhist disciplines such as the "Five Precepts" (五戒). Furthermore, for the Dharmatā (法性) to be recognized as a more active basis for the moral practice of sentient beings, its own functions or capacities must be systematized. This means it must not only involve cognitive realization of the Dharmatā itself but also actively determine the will, desire, and faith in the practice and realization of sentient beings. The framework that satisfies these theoretical requirements for the ideal establishment of moral practice in the Huayan tradition is the concept of the Three Classifications of Greatness (三大) in the *Qixin lun*. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Tathāgatagarbha thought was indeed an attractive subject for the Huayan patriarchs, and their heavy reliance on Tathāgatagarbha thought was naturally aligned with their philosophical perspectives.

However, as discussed above, the Huayan tradition does not merely rely on Tathāgatagarbha thought for its practice theory. This tradition advances the theories of mind and dependent origination borrowed from Tathāgatagarbha thought, philosophically expanding them into Huayan's unique concept of dependent origination in the Dharmadhātu. This chapter highlighted the philosophical differences between these two traditions by applying the concept of 'moral responsibility.' Moral responsibility can only be assigned to actual empirical subjects and thus must always pertain to phenomena. In other words, any philosophical concept outside of phenomena cannot be a subject of moral responsibility. Since the theoretical framework of Tathāgatagarbha thought focuses on the metaphysical concept of 'Tathāgatagarbha,' 'moral responsibility' is not a seamlessly applicable concept within this tradition. In contrast, the Huayan tradition delves more deeply into the abstract causal relationships among empirical subjects, which were not clearly addressed in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. Consequently, the structures of causal relationships expressed through the teachings of dependent origination

representative of these two traditions are not identical. The differences in the understanding of these causal structures naturally lead to distinct ethical implications in each tradition. Therefore, considering this context, if some contemporary scholars describe the philosophical essence of the Huayan tradition solely as 'arising from the nature (性起),' this may not be an entirely accurate expression of Huayan philosophy. While it is undeniable that Huayan philosophy originates from the concept of arising from the nature, its true practical orientation is focused on the existential world of the Dharmadhātu.⁶⁰⁷

Among the Huayan patriarchs, it was Chengguan who solidified the differences between these two traditions by establishing a unique theory of practice. As examined in the previous chapter, Chengguan's theory of the "Observations on the Perfect Integration of the Three Holy Ones (三聖圓融觀)" posits the simultaneous and harmonious practice of wisdom and altruistic actions as the moment when true nirvāṇa is achieved. This is not entirely disconnected from the descriptions and implications of the practice of cessation and observation (止觀) in the *Qixin lun*, which also considers the manifestation of wisdom through the practice of cessation and the achievement of great compassion through the practice of observation as crucial. The simultaneous achievement of wisdom and great compassion is required because they are both considered to be Functions manifesting from the pure Attributes of Suchness. This philosophical

⁶⁰⁷ This point becomes clearer in Chengguan's description of the Dharmadhātu (法界). In the *Dafangguangfo huayan jing suishu yanyi chu* (大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義初), which is also known as the *Huayan xuantan* (華嚴玄談), Chengguan emphasizes that the concept of the Dharmadhātu is the fundamental essence (通體) that encompasses the aim of the *Huayan jing* and underlies all sutras. It is the basis (通依) upon which all teachings depend, the realization attained by all Buddhas, and the origin of all bodhisattva practices. See, “今何最初便敘法界。故今答云。以是此經之所宗故。又是諸經之通體故。又是諸法之通依故。一切眾生迷悟本故。一切諸佛所證窮故。諸菩薩行自此生故。” Chengguan (澄觀), the *Dafangguangfo huayan jing suishu yanyi chu* (大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義初), T.36.1736.0002c16-20.

necessity is also inherited in Huayan's contemplation systems.⁶⁰⁸ However, Chengguan's "Observations on the Perfect Integration of the Three Holy Ones" takes it a step further by clearly declaring the importance of these two aspects as the "goal of practice" and "essential conditions for nirvāṇa," thereby shifting the ultimate focus of practice from the *realm of observation* to the *realm of practice*. This shift underscores a significant difference between the two traditions.

To sum up, in the consistent system of Huayan ethics, the achievement of morality is never completed merely through intellectual reflection on metaphysical foundations for moral practice or moral judgment and right actions. As implied by the fifty-two stages (位) of the bodhisattva path in Huayan, the perfection of Huayan ethics can only be achieved through the continuous practice and 'habituation' of moral actions. This explains why Huayan ethics, despite being based on Tathāgatagarbha thought, does not easily fall into the doubt of original enlightenment (本覺). When the Attributes of Suchness are fully manifested through habitual practices, and when such modes of behavior naturally constitute the practitioner's inner characteristics, only then can a person be considered to have achieved the moral ideal in the Huayan sense; that is, they become worthy of being called an enlightened one.

⁶⁰⁸ The fact that Huayan patriarchs embraced the concept of Tathāgatagarbha, along with its Threefold Classifications of Greatness, can also be confirmed through Chengguan's writings. See “今初。約三大釋者。意明法界具三大故。初句明用。次句明體。次句明相。” Ibid., T.36.1736.0001b14-16.

4.5 Further Consideration: Application of Huayan Philosophy to AI Ethics

More than a millennium has passed since the practice and teachings of Huayan Buddhism were established by its patriarchs, yet the traces they left behind continue to serve as important guidelines for practice in East Asian countries where the teaching of the Buddha remains vibrant.⁶⁰⁹ However, I believe that the potential role of the ethical system proposed by Huayan should not be confined solely within the Buddhist community. Whether positively or negatively, it is not difficult to find historical instances where Buddhist ideals and philosophical elements significantly influenced the formation of political and socio-ethical discourses beyond their original historical context.⁶¹⁰ Moreover, efforts to derive responses to various contemporary

⁶⁰⁹ In relation to this point, see Daoru Wei, “All is One: The Profound Influence of Huayan Buddhism on Chinese Philosophy, from the Past to the Present,” *Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism* 1 (2023); Erik J. Hammerstrom, *The Huayan University Network: The Teaching and Practice of Avatamsaka Buddhism in Twentieth-Century China* (Columbia University Press, 2020); Gyootag Shin, “석전 박한영 강백의 교학 전통: 『화엄경』 「십지품」 과 『선문염송집』 연찬을 중심으로 [Master Instructor “Seokjeon” Park Han-young’s Tradition of Studies of Buddhist Theories: Focusing on studies in “The Chapter of the Ten Stages” in The *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (華嚴經 十地品) and *Seonmunyeomsongjip*(禪門拈頌集)],” *The Journal of the Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* 70 (2014); Gyootag Shin, “송월주 스님의 사상과 보현행 [Song Uel Ju’s Thoughts and Practical Activities: Analyzed from Huayan Philosophical Interpretation],” *The Journal of Buddhism and Society* 10 (2018); Jiyun Kim, “『대승기신론』 「수행신심분」의 현대적 해석 [The Modern Interpretation of Faith and Practice of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*: Focus on Social Practices of Ven. T’aegong Wölchu],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 99 (2022).

⁶¹⁰ In this regard, the most representative example is the collaboration of Japanese Buddhism with imperialism, where the doctrines of Japanese Huayan Buddhism were also utilized. For studies on the collaboration of Japanese Buddhism with imperialism during the World War period, see Eiichi Otani, “전쟁은 죄악인가?: 20세기 초 일본불교에 서의 반론 [Is War a Sin?: Pacifism of Japanese Buddhism in Early 20th Century],” trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 185-187; Keiichi Harada, “일본에서의 전쟁과 종교 [War and Religion in Japan],” trans. Yongjoo Lee, *Won-Buddhist Thought & Religious Culture* 43 (2009): 118-131; Seungmee Cho, “근대 일본불교의 중국진출과 아시아주의 [Advance into China and Asianism of Japanese Buddhist in Modern Times],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 49 (2008): 281-297; Yonsang Won, “근대 일본불교에 대한 연구 동향과 과제 [The Research Trend and Task on Modern Japanese Buddhism],” *Japanese Cultural Studies* 12 (2015): 13-33.

The memory of such collaboration between the Buddhist community and Japanese imperialism has prompted a re-examination of the role of Buddhism in relation to nationalism. For studies related to this topic, see Christopher Ives, “Protect Dharma, Protect the Country: Buddhist War Responsibility and Social Ethics,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series 33 (2001); Jongwook Kim, “동아시아 근대의 형성에서 내셔널리즘과 불교 [Nationalism and Buddhism in the Formation of East Asian Modernity],” *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 42 (2006); Yonjae Kim, “중국근대의 민족불교에 있어서 護國論의 대두와 그 성격 [The Rise and Character of the

ethical issues—such as human rights, the environment, and life—from the foundation of Buddhist philosophy are still actively pursued in both Eastern and Western academia today.⁶¹¹ In the final section of this chapter, I aim to explore how the Huayan ethical system can provide valuable insights into contemporary ethical issues, investigating the potential for its applied ethical expansion.⁶¹² Through this exploration, I intend to demonstrate that the ethical values of Huayan Buddhism do not merely hold intellectual historical significance but remain relevant and useful in modern society. To explore this potential, I will focus on one of the most pressing and significant philosophical issues of our time: the ethics of artificial intelligence (AI).

One significant advantage that the Buddhist tradition may offer in addressing the ethical issues accompanying AI technology lies in the structural similarity between its fundamental teaching of dependent origination, particularly within the Huayan (華嚴) tradition, and

Doctrine of Country-defense in the Nationalistic Buddhism on Modern China],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 45 (2006); Yongseop Ko, “한·중·일 삼국의 근대불교학 연구방법론 [Examination on Methodology of Modern Buddhist Studies in Korea, China, and Japan],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 51 (2009); Ven. Seongwon, “Either Peacemakers or Anti-peacemakers: Imperialisms and Modern Korean Buddhism,” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 2 (2008); Byungjun Cheong and Jinmoo Kim, “중국 근대불교 연구와 민족불교의 발현 [A Research on Modern Chinese Buddhism and Manifestations of Chinese National Buddhism],” *불교학보* (佛敎學報) 57 (2011).

⁶¹¹ Oksun An, “생태적 삶의 태도로서 ‘동일시’와 ‘동체자비’ [Identification and Great Compassion as an Attitude of Ecological Life],” *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 1 (2007).

⁶¹² In this study, my approach to Huayan ethics aligns more closely with theoretical ethical analysis. However, contemporary scholars' positions and attitudes regarding the relationship between theoretical ethics and applied ethics appear to vary. For instance, Bernard Gert defines applied ethics as "the application" of ethical principles to specific issues. In contrast, Oksun An criticizes such a simplistic definition for failing to capture the critical perspectives unique to applied ethics. She points out that applied ethics does not solely rely on traditional theories for solutions; it sometimes accepts, rejects, or critiques ethical theories. Tom L. Beauchamp emphasizes that applied ethics should not be seen as secondary or less rigorous than ethical theory. He advocates for integrating applied contexts, such as case studies, into ethical theory to enrich philosophical inquiry. By doing so, both fields can benefit from a more holistic approach to moral problems, demonstrating that applied ethics is a legitimate and valuable aspect of philosophical practice. The fundamental approach of my research on Buddhist applied ethics adopts Beauchamp's perspective. For further discussion on the above topics, refer to the following studies: Bernard Gert, “Licensing Professions,” *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* 1 (Summer 1982); Oksun An, “응용윤리학 방법론에 대한 동양철학적 접근: 불교 응용윤리학 방법론 모색을 위한 시론 [An Eastern Philosophical Approach to the Methodology of Applied Ethics: A Reflection for Establishing Buddhist Applied Ethics],” *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophy* 28 (2003); Tom L. Beauchamp, “On Eliminating the Distinction between Applied Ethics and Ethical Theory,” *the Monist* 67 (1984).

contemporary generative AI models that produce outputs based on extensively collected data. This suggests that the moral elements of Buddhism can be valuable not only in the construction of theoretical frameworks for moral principles on a micro-level but also in shaping the field of AI ethics from a long-term perspective. Certain ethicists express apprehension regarding the prevailing methodology employed by artificial intelligence technology, which involves the utilization of extensive, accumulated data to devise algorithms and produce outputs. One primary concern is the potential for human desires, interests, and habits to be manipulated by machine-generated algorithms.⁶¹³ The various generative AI services currently available are constructed through machine learning from images, texts, videos, codes, and even prompts inputted by users of these services. There is no doubt that such collection and utilization of data will continue in the future. This means that the data creations potentially influence the experience of all users of the generative AI models that learned from them, regardless of the data creators' intentions. Therefore, not only the original creators of the data but also all users of the generative models inevitably bear some form of moral responsibility towards other users. Furthermore, the subsequent actions of those influenced will, in turn, potentially affect our experience of using generative AI technology, thereby placing us under a responsibility towards our future selves.⁶¹⁴

Intriguingly, if one substitutes 'data' in the structure of generative AI models with 'karma,' the structure of AI technology, characterized by its recursive influence on human cognition and behavior through large-scale data derived from human activities, exhibits substantial parallels with the epistemological (or ontological) framework of the theory of dependent origination found in the Buddhist tradition. To borrow Peter D. Hershock's expression,

⁶¹³ Jim Garrison, "Hickman, Buddhism, and Algorithmic Technology," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 20 (2023): 132.

⁶¹⁴ Peter D. Hershock, *Buddhism and Intelligent Technology: Toward a More Humane Future* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 31.

generative AI technologies function as *karmic engines*.⁶¹⁵ Due to these structural similarities, there is a reasonable expectation that the moral and philosophical insights based on the premise of dependent origination in the Buddhist tradition might also be applicable in today's AI era. However, such expectations can only be realized through a thorough examination of the potential applicability of Buddhist teachings to AI ethics from various perspectives.

The emergence of AI ethics as a prominent subject in academic discourse can be traced back to 2016, coinciding with substantial advancements in deep learning technology.⁶¹⁶ Since then, ethical discussions from various perspectives related to increasingly practical AI technologies have begun to emerge. Following the public release and commercialization of large-scale language models like ChatGPT after 2022, AI ethics has become one of the most significant issues encompassing political, economic, social, and academic domains.⁶¹⁷ Primarily, the potential influence of regulations pertaining to data collection and output quality on the fairness, accuracy, and reliability of this highly sophisticated technology has garnered recognition.⁶¹⁸ Subsequently, efforts to standardize AI ethics, aimed at governing the

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁶¹⁶ A study employing text mining and topic modeling techniques to examine recent trends in AI ethics research reveals a substantial increase in the volume of AI ethics-related studies starting from 2016. This year marked the introduction of AlphaGo, a highly advanced AI system developed by Google, which elicited widespread astonishment due to its unprecedented capabilities. While the study concentrates on AI ethics research conducted in South Korea, it is likely that research trends in other countries exhibit minimal deviations from these observations, considering that contemporary deep learning technology only began attracting significant attention following the 2012 ImageNet Large Scale Visual Recognition Challenge (ILSVRC). See Miyoung Kim and Sunju Park, “텍스트 마이닝을 활용한 인공지능 윤리 연구 동향 분석 [Analysis of AI Ethics Research Trends Using Text Mining],” *Journal of The Korean Association of Information Education* 27 (2023): 3-6.

⁶¹⁷ The emergence of transformer architecture-based natural language processing (NLP) technologies such as ChatGPT has become a watershed moment, significantly amplifying humanistic interest and research participation in artificial intelligence technology. See Rita Raley and Jennifer Rhee, “Critical AI: A Field in Formation,” *American Literature* 95 (2023): 190.

⁶¹⁸ The regulation of data collection and its subsequent outputs had been studied and implemented in algorithmic technology even before the advent of large-scale language models. For instance, in 2017, the "algorithmic accountability bill" was introduced in New York City. This bill aimed to investigate and report whether the algorithms, or automated decision systems, used within New York discriminated against individuals based on their

development and commercialization of artificial intelligence, have been undertaken simultaneously by global government agencies, research institutes, and corporate entities.

This process is ongoing, and it appears likely that interest and research in this area will expand even further in the near future. During this process, the domain of AI ethics witnesses active participation from various fields, not only traditional ethicists and legal researchers, but also engineers specializing in AI-related fields, who in many ways seem to lead the field. Despite being in its initial stages, AI ethics is currently engaged in the critical process of determining the trajectory of future ethical guidelines for this technology. Contributions from a variety of perspectives are being sought in the field of AI ethics.⁶¹⁹ In this context, if insights and theoretical frameworks from the Huayan tradition can be applied meaningfully to AI ethics research, it would be beneficial not only for the study of Buddhist ethics but also for addressing contemporary advanced issues.⁶²⁰

background factors. This encompassed algorithms utilized in AI technology, highlighting that the governance of data collection, classification, and the social issues arising from outputs had been considered relatively early. For more related cases on algorithmic accountability, see Yoehan Oh and Sungook Hong, “인공지능 알고리즘은 사람을 차별하는가? [Does Artificial Intelligence Algorithm Discriminate Certain Groups of Humans?],” *Journal of Science & Technology Studies* 18 (2018): 155-161; For issues related to algorithms and bias or discrimination, refer to the following papers: Cathy O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Crown Books, 2016); Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2017); Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru, “Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification,” *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research* 81 (2018); Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Ruha Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Medford, MA: Polity Press).

⁶¹⁹ Merve Hickok, “Lessons learned from AI ethics principles for future actions,” *AI Ethics* 1 (2021): 45.

⁶²⁰ The high barriers inherent in advanced AI technologies present a significant obstacle for traditional ethicists, which may be linked to the current situation where AI ethics research is predominantly led by engineers. Nevertheless, a group of scholars emphasizes the importance of traditional perspectives at this formative stage of AI research. For instance, Rita Raley and Jennifer Rhee, through the establishment of the new academic field of “Critical AI,” emphasize the importance of examining AI not only through technological lenses but also through cultural, social, and ethical dimensions. They advocate for a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights from various fields to critically analyze how AI technologies shape and are shaped by societal structures and cultural norms. Their argument is clearly articulated in their call for humanistic engagement through ‘five clusters’ for AI research. For more on these five clusters and the significance of Critical AI, see Rita Raley and Jennifer Rhee,

The topics of interest in the emerging field of AI ethics are highly diverse, given the broad scope of the technology's application across various social domains. This section focuses on how to provide a theoretical framework for assigning moral responsibility among the various stakeholders involved in AI technology, including developers, service providers, and users. As previously mentioned, moral responsibility presupposes the identification of the cause of a moral wrongdoing and the just assignment of the burden of resolving the issue to that cause. Over the past decade, since the establishment of deep learning-based AI technology, we have witnessed many problems arising from it, as well as problems that are clearly foreseeable. However, the current ethical discourses and legal regulations remain somewhat abstract and often fail to clearly identify specific individuals or groups as targets. This suggests that when AI technology malfunctions or proceeds in unintended ways, the responsible parties are not clearly designated to bear the necessary moral responsibility.⁶²¹ In other words, technological advancement and commercialization continue without clear moral accountability, a phenomenon that seems to stem from the *inherent* uncertainty and complexity of current AI technology.

In this context, a noteworthy technical feature of current AI models, particularly large language models, is their "emergent abilities." In 2022, a joint research team from Google and Stanford University published a study that caused a significant stir, reporting that as the scale of AI technology expands, there is a sudden and unpredictable surge in performance at a certain

"Critical AI: A Field in Formation," *American Literature* 95 (2023): 188-193.

⁶²¹ There is one additional critical issue concerning AI and moral responsibility: whether AI itself can be judged as a moral agent. This requires a comprehensive philosophical examination to determine if AI possesses a subjectivity comparable to that of humans. However, this inquiry falls outside the scope of this section's research intent. Therefore, this section will address the concept of moral responsibility related to AI solely as a human issue. For discussions on the conditions necessary to consider AI as a moral agent, see Sanghyung Lee, "윤리적 인공지능은 가능한가?: 인공지능의 도덕적, 법적 책임 문제 [Is it possible to be a moral Artificial Intelligence?: The Problem of moral and legal responsibility in A. I.]," *Journal of Law and Politics Research* 16 (2016): 290-295.

point.⁶²² The main argument of the article "Emergent Abilities of Large Language Models" is that large language models exhibit "emergent abilities," which do not appear in smaller-scale models but manifest only when models are scaled up significantly. These emergent abilities are unpredictable by traditional scaling laws that track performance improvements linearly with size increases, suggesting that significant increases in model scale can lead to unexpected improvements and new capabilities not anticipated from smaller models. The research on "emergent abilities" by Google and Stanford was later verified and supported by a related paper from Microsoft's research team.⁶²³

The primary reason why the papers on "emergent abilities" resonated so strongly in the academic and political spheres is that the existence of a phase transition, where AI performance suddenly increases, suggests an inherent *fundamental uncertainty* in its current operation and future development. According to a recent article published by the Center for Security and Emerging Technology, the "emergent abilities" refer to the concept that in complex systems, the overall behavior or characteristics cannot be fully understood just by analyzing the individual components. This idea is encapsulated by the holistic phrase 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts,' a notion dating back to Aristotle or beyond.⁶²⁴ This unpredictability poses significant

⁶²² Jason Wei et al., "Emergent Abilities of Large Language Models," *Transactions on Machine Learning Research* (August 2022).

⁶²³ In the Microsoft team's research, a comparative study of the output processes of GPT-3 and GPT-4 revealed that GPT-4, which was trained solely as a language model, suddenly began producing significant outputs in various areas such as visualization and numerical calculations when its computational capacity reached a certain threshold. See, Sébastien Bubeck et al., "Sparks of Artificial General Intelligence: Early experiments with GPT-4," *arXiv*, Apr 2023, URL: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2303.12712>. However, there are also critical perspectives on the discovery of these "emergent abilities." Critics have raised concerns about the research methodologies used in the related papers on "emergent abilities," although they do not seem to deny the point that AI performance may increase with the scale of the equipment. This suggests that the underlying uncertainties in AI technology development are not fundamentally resolved. For representative studies related to this point, see Rylan Schaeffer et al., "Are Emergent Abilities of Large Language Models a Mirage?," *arXiv*, May 2023, URL: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2304.15004>.

⁶²⁴ Thomas Woodside, "Emergent Abilities in Large Language Models: An Explainer," Center for Security and

challenges, particularly in ensuring the safety of these models, as new capabilities could appear unexpectedly, potentially including harmful ones. It is reasonably expected that the many problems that this uncertainty in AI operation has already caused, or may cause, intersect with ethical concerns.

This technological uncertainty in AI becomes even more complex when combined with the *relational* uncertainties arising during its development and commercialization. As widely publicized, current AI models based on machine learning are formed by training on countless documents, images, and other data accessible on the web. The extensive data collection involved has already sparked significant public attention due to socio-technical issues related to copyright and basic rights simply by the operation of these models. Furthermore, during the reinforcement learning process, numerous labelers participated in efforts to guide the AI's output in specific directions. This process also encountered problems, as biases based on race or gender were unintentionally (or intentionally) reflected in the outputs. Similarly, algorithmic systems, which have been applied in commercial services relatively early, also fundamentally rely on the extensive acquisition of user information and share similar problems. The characteristic of AI technologies based on algorithms and machine learning is quite clear: they are trained or constructed by indiscriminately acquiring and classifying vast amounts of data from numerous sources. A significant number of developers and users are intricately involved in the process of developing and enhancing these models.

As Hershock's expression "karmic engine" suggests, developers and users of AI and algorithmic services, the sources of the data utilized in their development and reinforcement, and

Emerging Technology, Georgetown University, April 16, 2024, URL: <https://cset.georgetown.edu/article/emergent-abilities-in-large-language-models-an-explainer/>.

even possibly the AI technology itself are all intricately entangled as both contributors and recipients. Therefore, when morally problematic expressions, ideas, or thoughts emerge as outputs, it is nearly impossible to identify who should bear moral responsibility for these outputs.⁶²⁵ This does not mean that there is no cause for these moral issues; rather, tracking it is extremely difficult. Additionally, the fact that it is almost impossible to trace how current commercial AI models optimize parameters for computations and assign weights to produce outputs further complicates this problematic situation.

Due to these characteristics, a clear moral issue associated with current advanced technologies, often likened to an "inaccessible black box," can be identified.⁶²⁶ This phenomenon results in the disappearance of moral responsibility or *moral disengagement*. While the existence of wrongdoing and wrongdoers is evident, tracking and assigning responsibility to such individuals is nearly impossible. This is particularly evident in the socio-technical issues of discrimination and hate. The fact that AI and algorithmic technologies produce problematic outputs suggests that these issues are already embedded within the data they are trained on. Given the vastness of the data used for training, this is not entirely surprising. However, the challenge arises in determining who should bear moral responsibility for expressions of hate and discrimination. If multiple entities have contributed to the traces of hate and discrimination found in the data, how can we determine which parts the AI utilized in its computations? Moreover, if the AI's computational processes combine expressions from different contexts to produce subtly new forms of discriminatory content, such as merging the historical context of anti-Black racism

⁶²⁵ Rita Raley and Jennifer Rhee, "Critical AI: A Field in Formation," *American Literature* 95 (2023): 190. For a discussion on the complexity of assigning moral responsibility in algorithmic systems, see Louise Amoore, *Cloud Ethics: Algorithms and the Attributes of Ourselves and Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 1-25.

⁶²⁶ Rita Raley and Jennifer Rhee, "Critical AI: A Field in Formation," *American Literature* 95 (2023): 192-193.

with contemporary anti-Asian discrimination to generate new discriminatory expressions, can we pinpoint who should be held morally responsible? The answer to these questions is likely no one.⁶²⁷ At this point, we witness the significant limitations of an action-centered ethical perspective within the realm of AI ethics. Actions clearly exist, but we are faced with an unprecedented situation where it is impossible to identify the actors responsible.

The blind spots of AI and algorithm technologies urgently call for the intervention of traditional ethicists.⁶²⁸ One possible solution to address this moral disengagement is to propose a theoretical framework that interprets and re-applies the concept of moral responsibility to fit the situation. The ethical structure of responsibility derived from the Huayan theory of interdependent origination can offer one such a solution. As analyzed in the previous sections, the ethical characteristics implied in the Huayan theory of interdependent origination involve a network of infinitely intertwined individual entities, each of which contributes to the totality of existence in abstract ways. This theory posits that all entities bear moral responsibility towards each other. The relational expressions used by Huayan patriarchs to define this

⁶²⁷ The cases of several AI chatbots that had to be forcibly terminated due to the incorrect learning processes caused by users' expressions of hate and discrimination demonstrate the technical difficulty of linking actions with moral responsibility. For instance, consider the case of 'Iruda 1.0,' which launched in December 2020 but was terminated in less than a month due to the algorithm being contaminated by repeated hateful expressions from users. For socio-technical studies on this incident, refer to the following: Heejeong Sohn, "인공지능과 젠더 테크놀로지: 이루다1.0 논란을 중심으로 [AI and Technologies of Gender: On the Controversy on Chatbot Iruda]," *Gender and Culture* 15 (2022); Hyunjun Kim and Kwangsuk Lee, "인공지능 기술 신화로서의 의인화 비판: 챗봇 '이루다' 사례 연구 [Questioning Anthropomorphism as an AI Techno-myth: A Case Study of the chatbot 'Iruda']," *Communication Theories* 62 (2023); Gunoo Kim, "챗봇 이루다를 통해 본 인공지능윤리의 근본 문제 [Two Fundamental Questions in AI Ethics: With a Reflection on AI Chatbot Iruda]," *Transdisciplinary Humanities* 10 (2022).

⁶²⁸ John McCarthy emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between AI and philosophy, suggesting that each can foster the development of the other. According to him, traditional philosophical theories can provide essential insights into philosophical issues critical to AI research, such as knowledge, belief, and intentionality. Conversely, AI technology can offer philosophers new tools and methodologies. Although McCarthy presented this argument before the extensive application of deep learning technologies in AI research, it remains relevant to contemporary AI studies. See John McCarthy, "The Philosophy of AI and the AI of Philosophy," in *Philosophy of Information*, ed. by Pieter Adriaans and Johan van Benthem (North Holland, 2008), 719-748.

interconnectedness, such as “mutual identity (相即)” and “mutual interpenetration (相入),” are crucial for understanding these complex moral relationships. These concepts encompass not only the 'actions' of each entity but also their 'moral qualities as agents,' incorporating them into an infinite web of karmic relations. Thus, each being is subject to moral evaluation and judgment not only by their actions but also by their qualities as part of the whole.

Applying the Huayan-based structure of moral responsibility to the context of AI and algorithm technologies suggests that all stakeholders involved in AI services, including developers, users, and potentially the AI models themselves, bear moral responsibility towards one another. According to the principles of mutual identity and mutual interpenetration, they must ensure that they do not leave harmful traces in the data and must also possess the appropriate moral qualities as participants in AI technology. The 'cyber network' centered around AI can only achieve an ideal state, akin to a 'complete house,' when it is composed of individuals with these moral qualities. It should be noted that, in the Huayan context, possessing moral qualities ensures that one's actions align with moral standards. This integration of an agent-centered moral evaluation is crucial in the context of AI and algorithm technologies because, even though it is technically impossible to track the specific actions of individuals in cyberspace, it still allows for the evaluation and assignment of moral responsibility based on their social and relational aspects.⁶²⁹

Therefore, in the structure of moral responsibility based on the Huayan theory of

⁶²⁹ Indeed, the Huayan tradition does not reject an 'action-centered' ethical perspective. As discussed in the previous chapter, Tathāgatagarbha thought, which Huayan utilizes as a core theoretical element, explains why individual practices must be moral and why they must conform to Buddhist standards of conduct (such as precepts) by linking them to the Attributes and Functions of the Tathāgatagarbha, or the intrinsic nature of sentient beings' minds. Therefore, in the Tathāgatagarbha and Huayan traditions, actions remain important indicators of moral judgment. However, this judgment is consistently integrated with the assessment of the moral qualities of the agent. It is important to note that at this point, the equation of 'practicing good actions' with 'being an agent with good moral qualities' is assumed.

interdependent origination, it is not necessary to identify a specific agent as responsible for a particular action. We must all participate in the cyber network as morally upright beings, and such responsibility is consistently assigned to us. In some respects, the moral relationships that individuals have toward each other in the Huayan tradition align with communitarianism. This is because all individuals comprising a particular group share a common good and are endowed with responsibilities and obligations toward that good. A distinguishing feature of Huayan, compared to other communitarian theories, is that the basis for this common good lies in the universal mind possessed by each individual. The structure of the infinitely interpenetrating Dharmadhātu is possible because each individual possesses the Tathāgatagarbha. This is, of course, established based on the Tathāgatagarbha thought, which identifies the individual with the whole, considering them to have the same purpose. Therefore, despite the ideal of forming a perfect collective, it is hard to deny that the ethical structure of Huayan remains individual-oriented. By valuing the individual while aiming for the collective good, Huayan's Dharmadhātu ethics can be said to differ from collectivism or totalitarianism, which might undermine individual value. In the ideal ethical structure of Huayan, the good of the individual is never assumed to be in conflict with the good of the collective.

Over the past decade, there have been significant advancements in AI ethics research. However, the recent public release of more advanced generative AI models has dramatically shifted the landscape of AI ethics, sparking shock and interest among the public and academic circles. This shift has moved discussions away from abstract discourses to more concrete issues, making the potential moral problems more apparent. Therefore, it can be said that the formation of the field of AI ethics is still in progress. What is clear at this point is the urgent need for the involvement not only of scientists and technologists but also of sociologists and humanists.

Ethics is one of the most deeply accumulated fields in all academic disciplines, and traditional perspectives certainly offer insights into cutting-edge areas. Buddhist philosophy is one such traditional perspective. In this section, I explored the philosophical characteristics of the Chinese Huayan tradition to lay the foundation for providing valuable insights in the AI era. This exploration does not encompass all the extensive teachings of Huayan but focuses on a small aspect of it. As I conclude this study, I hope that not only Huayan but also various Buddhist perspectives will actively contribute to resolving the moral issues posed by modern advanced technologies.

4.6 Bibliography

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